





NATHALIE'S CHUM



Nathalie's Chum

BY

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*Author of "Teddy, Her Book," "Phebe, Her Profession,"
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“PROEM

“To be honest, to be kind —
To earn a little and to spend a little less,
To make upon the whole a family happier for his
presence —
To keep a few friends.”

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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Nathalie's Chum

CHAPTER ONE

“Oh, merciful, meacious my!

This life is nothing but one huge pie.

“**M**INCE PIE, too!” Nathalie added, while she snapped the creases out of a pink chambray skirt, preparatory to folding it. “My pie is all meat and apple, though, with a dreadfully skimpy amount of spice and plums, just like all the other pies that Aunt Bella turns out. Anyway, it is chopped into small enough pieces.”

She put the skirt into an open trunk beside her, went to her bureau and took up a box of ribbons which she upset into her lap and started to sort over. For a time, there was no sound but the creak of her weak-kneed rocking-chair and the hiss of her fingers rubbing along the bright ribbons. Then she began to talk to herself again.

“It isn’t that I am sorry to leave Aunt Bella and Mildred and this house. It’s not that a bit. I’ve had a good enough time here, this last year. Even Chesterton is better than boarding-school; and Aunt Bella is well enough, even if she does remind one of *The Dead March in Saul*. What can you expect of a woman whose favorite hymn-tune is *Naomi*? I devoutly hope that Harry isn’t given to being low in his mind. I should think he would be now, poor fellow, when he faces the prospect before him. I wonder how it will feel to have a brand-new brother.” She twisted her mouth into a knot. “Let’s see! Harry is twenty-six. I am fifteen, and he hasn’t seen me for four years. Hm! The chances are that he will treat me like a baby, and try to make me toe a chalk-line. Well, I just won’t; that’s all there is about it, and he can take it out in trying. I wish I had some idea what he is like.”

She tossed the last of the ribbons back into the box, and then picked up a letter which lay on the floor beside her, a letter worn thin by frequent readings. Already she knew it by heart; but she went through it again from end to end with a careful scrutiny which

missed no detail of the minute handwriting. As she folded the sheet, she sucked in her breath and shook her head, while the dimples came into her brown cheeks.

"That little, pinched-up writing looks a good deal as if he knew what he was about, and he signs himself in full, Henry Myers Arterburn. Old Mr. Prim! Probably he will want me to call him Brother Henry. Oh, come in, Mildred." Her soliloquy ended abruptly, as she raised her eyes to see a white figure standing on the threshold.

Mildred came forward, brush in hand, and perched herself on the foot of the bed.

"I just thought I would come in to take a last look at you," she remarked as she unbraided her long brown hair.

"Oh, don't! I hate last things," Nathalie said tragically.

"But I thought you wanted to go."

"I do, and then again, I don't. I've just grown used to living in Chesterton, and I hate to pull myself up by the roots and plant myself somewhere else. Besides, Mildred ——"

"Well?"

"I shall miss you."

"Glad of it," said Mildred flatly. "We

have had some good times together, but they are about over, if I have to go to Boston to school, next month. I rather envy you. Just think of living in New York!"

"Just think of living with all those children!" Nathalie retorted.

"Yes, I know; but New York!"

"Yes, I do know. New York is well enough; but this setting up housekeeping with a stranger brother and three rampaging children all in one-story rooms on top of an elevator!" Nathalie's face was as disconsolate as her words were chaotic.

"I've never seen the children," Mildred said, as she methodically parted her hair and attacked one of the portions with her brush.

"Neither have I, for three years. That is the worst of family break-ups, the dropping apart for a while, and then the trying to patch the fragments together again. I'm their sister, and they know it; but that doesn't make us any the less strangers. From all that I can find out, though, Peggy and Ralph are plain, every-day terrors, but Fizzums is what they call an angel-child, babbles about heaven till everybody is off his guard and then, when the coast is clear, gets into

the worst kind of mischief. He is the child who fed two loaves of angel cake to the hens, so they could fly up into the sky and see God."

Mildred began on the other side of her hair.

"There's one comfort; you won't have to manage him," she suggested consolingly.

"Don't be too sure it is a comfort. Have you ever seen Cousin Eudora?"

Mildred shook her head.

"No? She is preposterous, utterly preposterous." Nathalie emphasized her words by hurling three or four pairs of stockings into her trunk. "She diddles when she walks, and she wears a fall of curls and gaiter-boots, at least she did when I saw her last. She sounds her S's, too, and hisses like one of these peanut-roasting machines. Mildred, I know I shall die of her!" She laughed; but it was evident that the tears were near the surface, and Mildred judged it would be well to change the subject.

"Is all your packing done?"

"No; not nearly. I couldn't bear to begin, and now I am so late about it that I am tumbling things into my trunks, any which

way. Do help me fold these gowns, and then I can fill up the corners with odds and ends."

Mildred slid off the bed and went to peer into the nearer trunk.

"Nathalie Arterburn! Your rainy-day shoes are in the very middle of your best gown. What would mamma say?"

"That I was a child of wrath," Nathalie responded tranquilly. "Straighten things out a little, you dear, orderly soul; and don't you dare to tell any tales. Which is my most becoming hat?"

"Your blue one. Why?"

"Because I intend to pack the others and wear that."

"You'll be sure to ruin it," Mildred objected practically.

"I don't care if I do. I am determined to make a good appearance, when I show myself to Henry Myers Arterburn, for he will need all the encouragement he can get, poor soul! Imagine yourself coming home from Europe, to be changed all at once from a cocky young student to a staid old family man, and to be confronted by me and a whole John-Rogers family group of children! Do you suppose he will attempt to buy their stockings and hats

and things?" She giggled nervously; then of a sudden her head went down among the pillows and she began to sob.

It was only a short interval before she sat up again suddenly.

"I'm a goose, Mildred; but at least you will admit you never saw me do that before. Now do go to bed. I'll finish in the morning; there will be plenty of time before the man comes for the trunks. I am sleepy now, and I truly wish you would go."

Her cousin hesitated irresolutely. She was a little skeptical in regard to this sudden drowsiness, and she was tempted to offer a sympathetic word; but Nathalie took her by the shoulders and turned her out of the room.

At that same hour, two young men were tramping the deck of a home-coming steamer. The full moon was whitening the crests of the waves around them; but they were heedless of moon and wave, while they let their talk wander from the future before them backward over the past eight years of student life which had bound them so closely together. Already the four years at Yale and the four years in Germany were growing vague in the distance. Sandy Hook would be sighted, early the next

day, and then it would be only a question of hours until the width of half the continent should lie between them. Under such conditions, the past was more to them than any future, however broad and brilliant.

Suddenly the slighter, more lithe one of them pushed his hair back from his forehead with a little impatient gesture.

“I can't get used to it, myself. I suppose we all find it hard to settle into harness; but it does seem to me that my harness has an uncommon number of straps to it.”

His companion understood him without explanation.

“Will they be waiting for you?” he asked.

“No; I shall have a week, before they appear. That will give me time to lay in a supply of flour and soap and such truck.”

“Is the apartment furnished?”

“Yes, Mrs. Myers advised that. All the old things were sold out, when the house went, and she thought we'd better not buy more till we found out just what we wanted. She chose this place for us. It is fully furnished, and we can go into it at any minute. All I have to do, is to get some stuff to eat.”

His friend laughed.

"I'd like to watch your early exploits as a family man, Hal. Who will housekeep, you or your sister?"

"Neither of us. We have a spooky old cousin coming down to cook and look out for the children and play propriety generally. Her name is Eudora Evelina Shaw, and she is a Christian Scientist; but she will answer the purpose. I am afraid Nathalie may find her rather trying; but it was the best I could do."

"It is barely possible that she may find your sister trying. How old is she?"

"Sixty plus, or so."

"Your sister?"

"No; Eudora Evelina. Nathalie is somewhere near fifteen. There were three children between us, but they died."

"And there are three little ones; aren't there?"

"Yes, three. Peggy is ten, Ralph a little older, and Frank is four. He was born just before we went abroad. Think of the changes, since we left home!"

For a time, they paced the deck in silence. Their thoughts were busy with the genial man and his dainty, gracious wife whose presence had added so much to the enjoyment

of their commencement week. Less than a year later, an epidemic of typhoid had done its merciless work; and, far away in Germany, Harry Arterburn had learned that his old home must be given up, his orphan brothers and sisters scattered among more distant relatives. He had braced himself bravely to meet the shock. The tragedy had come; it would have been unwise to go home then. He could only accustom himself to the thought of his loss, and then bend all his energies to the completion of his study, to his preparation for meeting the new responsibilities which would face him upon his return to America. A boy of twenty-three, alone in a foreign university, does not find it altogether easy to go through such an experience; and, during the few months which followed his first sorrow, Harry Arterburn lost much of the exuberant fun that had made him one of the leaders of his college class.

It was he who broke the silence.

“I wrote to Nathalie that she'd better start, to-morrow, and accumulate the little ones on her way down. They are in Vermont with my mother's people, and Nathalie has been spending the last year with my father's sister

in Maine. They all will be in New York by the first of next week."

"You don't mean you expect that fifteen-year-old girl to pilot three children from Vermont to New York?"

"Why not?"

"It strikes me that you have put a good deal of responsibility on her. She is nothing but a child, herself."

"Fifteen. I had been a year at Andover, when I was fifteen."

"Yes; but boys are more self-reliant. Still, fifteen is a very uncertain quantity. She may be a baby, and she may be a woman. You can never tell. She may look up to you as to a fond parent; she may lord it over you with a rod of iron. Knowing you, I rather incline to the latter opinion. But, Hal ——"

"Yes?"

"How are you going to be fixed for money?" his friend asked rather hurriedly. "You won't need to worry about that; will you? Because, if you will, I can straighten that out, or the governor can."

"No. I am grateful to you, and all that; but we shall get on. There was something from the estate, and my salary from the

university will help it out. I wish we needn't live in New York; but we shall do it simply, without any servant. Of course it will take something to run a family of five; but we shall manage, somehow or other. I am hoping to get a little tutoring to do, and that will help."

There was a short pause. Then his friend burst out impatiently,—

"It's a beastly shame, Hal, to have a fellow like you hampered by being turned into a domestic ways and means committee. Isn't there anybody else to look out for those infernal children? If you were free to do as you choose, you would arrive, within three years."

"Maybe," Harry retorted philosophically. "Unfortunately, I'm not exactly free. However, it might be worse. I don't answer for the little ones; but I have a general notion that, inside a year, I shall be thanking my lucky stars I have a sister like Nathalie. Meanwhile, I am going to bed. I must get up early and decide whether to buy baking powder or yeast first, and whether bar soap or pulverized is the more efficacious. You needn't come yet; you're not a householder, but I must have my beauty sleep. Good-night."

CHAPTER TWO

“NATHALIE!”

“Yes?”

“Nathalie!”

“Well?”

“Nathalie!” This time, the voice was imperious.

“What is it?”

“Why didn’t you answer me before?”

“I did.”

“No; you didn’t.”

“I called three times, Peggy. When you want something, I wish you would come here, not stand and shout from afar.”

Peggy waived that question.

“Where is my book?”

“What book?”

“The history, of course. I can’t find it.”

“Perhaps Ralph has it,” Nathalie suggested.

“No; he hasn’t. I asked him. I wish you’d hunt it up.” Peggy’s tone was growing dangerously near to a whine.

"I can't, Peggy. I'm busy."

"What are you doing?"

"Unpacking Harry's books."

Peggy appeared on the threshold, dangling her hat in her hand.

"That's always the way," she grumbled. "People are so busy doing things for somebody else that they can't ever do anything for me. I wanted Cousin Eudora to pin my belt together in the back, and she was washing dishes and wouldn't; and now you're so busy with all Harry's books that you won't look for just one of mine. 'Tisn't fair."

"But, Peggy ——"

"Oh, you needn't, if you don't want to. I can help myself." And Peggy, her chin in the air, stalked out of the room. Outside the door, she paused long enough to administer her final rebuke. "I did think it would be nice to have a sister to love me; but now I'm not so sure of it. Some day, you'll wish you had."

It was still early in the day, and Nathalie's temper was unruffled. Accordingly, she laughed unfeelingly, and went on with her work. Ten minutes later, there came another interruption.

“Nathalie! Oh, Nathalie! Where are you?”

“In the parlor, Ralph.”

Instinctively she ducked her head and drew in her breath, as Ralph swept down upon her. The past week had served to make the brother and sister close friends; but not all the affection in creation could conceal the fact that Ralph's embraces were occasionally rather exuberant. Now he dashed into the room, collided with a pile of books, stumbled over the débris of a packing-box and then cast himself down at Nathalie's side.

“Oh, but Peggy is jolly cross!” he observed. Nathalie laughed.

“I suspected something of the kind. She was here, only a minute ago. What is the matter?”

“School. Hal says we must start in, tomorrow, and she has been bragging, all summer long, that when she came to New York, she wouldn't have to study any more. Now she finds she must, it goes against the grain, and Peggy's grain is a powerful tough one.”

“What about yours?” his sister asked, as she rescued an illustrated Kipling from his smudgy fingers.

“Haven’t any. I’m all soft and sweet, like taffy when you’ve pulled it off the stick. Say, Nathalie, what are you doing this for? I want you to come out in the park with me.”

Nathalie cast a longing glance out of the window.

“I wish I could, Ralph; but I promised Harry I would put his books in order for him. He needs them, and he is so busy.”

“What doing?” Ralph’s accent was tinged with scorn.

“Getting things settled.”

“So am I. I upset my tool chest, last night when I went to bed, and I have been picking up screws and awls and things ever since. I’ll help you, Nathalie, and we’ll dump these on the shelves in a hurry. Then won’t you come?”

“Oh, Ralph, look out for the corners! Don’t whack so!” Nathalie begged, as the books began to thump and grind along the shelves.

“Do it, yourself, then; but hurry up. It is awfully stupid here, not a soul to speak to, when I go out, and Peggy cross as thunder all the time. Where is Hal?”

“Gone to see the people Mr. Myers told him about. I do wish he could get the chance to tutor that boy.”

“What’s the use?”

“Money,” Nathalie said tersely. “It is going to cost us a lot to live here, even in this scrap of a place; and poor Harry will have to work hard to keep things going. I wish I weren’t such a worthless piece of property.”

“You’re no worse than any girl,” Ralph observed encouragingly.

“Maybe not. At any rate, I’m bad enough. I can’t do one single thing to help along, and I just hate plain gowns and bread puddings. I’d like to be a millionairess and have fifty-seven servants.”

“No good. They would always be in a row with each other. Aren’t you ever coming out?”

Nathalie looked down at the pile of books, then up at the empty shelves.

“I’ll be ready in an hour, Ralph. It takes time to pack a bushel of beans into a pint cup, and that is what I feel as if I were doing, every time I try to stow away our things into this bandbox of a house. It’s like playing house, somehow. I suppose I shall get used

to it; but after all the waste room there was in Chesterton, this does seem rather tucked-up. You are dreadfully in the way, dear. Don't you want to go somewhere else to wait?"

"Don't want to; but I suppose I must." And, with his cap cocked on the extreme back of his head, Ralph obediently departed.

There followed another interval of quiet, while Nathalie worked steadily, sorting and packing away the books which were her brother's chiefest pride. There were many of them and of many sorts, for Harry was a student by nature and for years he had been gathering this little library, putting into it the money that his fellow-students would have thrown away upon more doubtful pleasures. The greater part of it was of little interest to Nathalie, tough old histories, indigestible essays and grim volumes of German science. These she stowed away swiftly, paying more heed to size than to subject, and only intent upon squeezing them into straight, serried ranks on the fast-filling shelves. Then, as her hand rested on a green and gold volume, she paused to look again. That look was her undoing. An hour later, she was still buried in the early chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*.

A step aroused her, and she looked up, as Harry entered the room.

"Back so soon? What success?" she demanded.

"I'm not sure yet," he answered, as he threw himself down into a chair.

"What do you think about it?"

"I think I want it rather badly, a good deal more than it wants me."

Letting the book slide out of her lap, Nathalie rose and stood beside him.

"Is something wrong, Harry?" she asked, with sudden gravity.

"Not a bit. It is only that I want to get this place as tutor, and there are two or three others in ahead of me. I don't believe one of them wants or needs it more than I do."

Nathalie deposited herself on the arm of his chair, took his face in her two palms and tilted it upward. Seen even at that undignified angle, it was a good face and an attractive one, with its firm lips, its steady blue eyes and its thick light brown hair. Harry Arterburn had just escaped being handsome; he had not escaped being an uncommonly clean, wholesome-looking fellow evidently of gentle birth. For the rest, the dignity of his eye-

glasses was totally destroyed by a dimple which was the close twin to Nathalie's own. Otherwise, there was little likeness between the brother and sister. Nathalie's hair was yellow, her color deeper, her face more full. At the very first glance, she gave an impression of perfect physical health, no nerves to speak of, and a thorough enjoyment of the good things of life. Nathalie Arterburn would never peak and pine in mourning over the inevitable.

Just now, however, her face was unusually earnest.

"Harry," she said slowly; "I do wish you would tell me, tell me honestly, whether we children are going to be too much of a load for you to carry."

"Of course not. We shall get on well enough," he replied, flinching a little under her steady gaze. "You don't need to worry about things, Nathalie."

"I'm not worrying," she answered sturdily, though in her secret heart she was still a little afraid of her dignified older brother, and regretted that he was not cast in the same mental mould as the more happy-go-lucky Ralph. "Of course I know we aren't rich,



and there are a lot of us. It isn't quite fair for you to have it all to do. I wish I could help."

"You? You're going into school, next week."

"I won't," she protested. "I'm going to stay here and keep house."

"What about Cousin Eudora Evelina?"

"She can cook and scrub. I shall beautify things and warm your slippers for you." She laughed a little; then she returned to the charge. "You might as well tell me about things, Harry, first as last. I ought to know about them, and you ought to have somebody to talk them over with and free your mind, when they go wrong."

"A child like you?" he asked teasingly.

She flushed hotly.

"I'm not a child, even if I am only fifteen. I've lived by myself so much and changed about from place to place so often that I feel grown-up and settled, almost as old as you. Do let me be in it, Harry. I don't want to be treated as you would treat Peggy."

"Why, Nathalie, I didn't suppose ——"

"You ought to have supposed," she interrupted hotly. "Of course I do. We two are all the family there is, for the children don't

count, nor Eudora Evelina. After this, do let's talk things out and make plans together. It's not that I am curious; but I honestly think it is the only way we can do. You're nothing but a boy, your own self, and you may need my advice," she added coaxingly.

Harry Arterburn had had theories in regard to woman's position in the family. Without being self-assertive, he had never contemplated the possibility of sharing with Nathalie the financial and domestic problems which even the past two weeks had set before him. Now, as he looked up into the eager face beside him, he meekly accepted the situation. Moreover, he suddenly realized that it might not be such a bad idea, after all, to have a parent coadjutor in his fatherly responsibilities, when that coadjutor took the form of a girl like Nathalie. For the first time since he had met her at the train and had halted in astonishment at sight of his tall, comely sister, he put his arm around her in true brotherly fashion.

Satisfied at this mark of liking from her undemonstrative brother, Nathalie cuddled against him for a minute; then she straightened up again.

"Now tell me all about the place," she said briskly.

"It's on West Fifty-ninth Street; they are people of some money, I should think. The father is a musician."

"Long hair and a fiddle?" Nathalie questioned irreverently.

"No; he has seen an occasional barber, and he wore unprofessional gray tweed. There are three boys; but it is only the youngest who needs a tutor. He broke himself in two, somehow or other; and, while he has been getting well, he has dropped behind in his classes. The other two are in Yale; this one ought to have gone in, next year; but he can't."

"How old is he?"

"Seventeen, perhaps."

"Great stupid!"

"No; I told you he broke himself."

"How?"

"I'm not just sure."

"Is he mended?"

"Apparently. At least, I didn't miss any pieces."

"Oh, you saw him?"

"Yes. Mr. Myers thought we'd better have each other up for inspection."

"What is he like?"

"Homely and overgrown. Acts lazy, speaks like a gentleman, looks cross."

Nathalie made a grimace of disgust.

"How you will enjoy him! Why don't they put him into school?"

"I've an idea that he isn't very strong yet, and that he has been rather demoralized by too much coddling. Besides, if there's so much lost time to be made up, he can do it best with a tutor."

"And you want him?"

"Yes. That is, I want the extra thousand a year."

"It would go a good ways in shoes and sugar," she said, laughing. "How much time would it take?"

"Three hours a day."

"That boy here for three hours a day!" Her tone endeavored to express consternation.

"Oh, no; I shall go there."

Nathalie's face fell.

"Oh. What for?"

"That is the arrangement—if I get it."

"But I thought he would be such fun to know," she said ruefully.

Harry hesitated.

"We aren't likely to know him, Nathalie."

"Not if you tutor him?"

"Not in the way you mean, not as a friend."

"I should like to know why not."

"Because ——" Harry faltered a little, as he met the flashing eyes; "because we aren't likely to. I shall be his tutor, hired to put classics and things into his head. His father, Mr. Myers says, is a famous musician, and their home is very beautiful. They have all the friends they wish, sister mine; and their friends don't live in a little bit of a furnished apartment with only an old cousin to do the work."

"But papa was ——" she began.

"Yes; but papa isn't here, and we must stand on our own feet. I want you to go into a good school, Nathalie, and to make friends of your own. Meanwhile, we must remember that, even if we did have a Puritan ancestor or two, we are not people who are likely to be asked to be friends of the Barretts."

Nathalie watched him steadily, unflinchingly, while she listened to this first lesson in social science. When he had finished, she said, with a cold distinctness,—

"Never mind talking about it, Harry. I

think I understand, and, even if I don't, there is no especial use in trying to say it in so many words."

There was a long pause. It was Nathalie who broke it, and her voice had the old hearty ring.

"I hope you will get him, Harry. As long as he is stupid and lazy and bad-tempered and snobbish, at least, you will feel that you have earned your money. Then, when it is earned, you can come home to your sister, and she will help you spend it. Now do help me put these books away, for I hear Ralph shouting for me. If I don't hurry, he will stir up Fizzums, and then woe betide us all!"

Half through with her task, she turned again to face her brother.

"When you go to the Barretts' house," she inquired; "that is, if you do go, will you have to go in by the area door, or may you use the front steps?"

CHAPTER THREE

HEREDITY is a mighty power.

In the days of her lusty girlhood, Mrs. Gifford Barrett had allowed her bicycle to run away with her, coming down a steep hill during a driving shower. She had had the best of a collision with a stranger man, and had laid him low at her feet. Later on, he had laid himself at her feet once more, and had coaxed her into marrying him. It was only the first part of the situation which had proved hereditary, however. No one but Mrs. Barrett would have bought a second-hand skeleton, lashed it to her handle-bar and started for home in the face of a threatening downpour. Nobody but Kingsley Barrett would have tied two bicycles together with twenty feet of clothes-line, and then have undertaken to ride the forward one of them down through Morningside Park. The rear wheel not only had a less experienced rider; but it also had a higher gear than did his own.

In consequence, a dignified coachman lost his stolidity and pulled his horses on their haunches in a futile attempt to avoid the tangle of boys and bicycles and rope that came plunging down upon him.

The other boy escaped with a cut face and a sprained elbow; but Kingsley Barrett, who never did anything by halves, was taken out from under the horses' feet, more dead than alive, and the next fourteen months were one long battle with pain and the probability of permanent injury. It caused him to be coddled and spoiled, it impaired his temper; but it in no wise daunted his spirit, and when he slowly came back into a semblance of his old-time activity, he was surrounded by no halo of pensive invalidism. Even his critical brother Paul, a sophomore in Yale, was forced to admit that Kingsley was bidding fair to become very much a man.

Nevertheless, the year of invalid life had set its mark upon him. His face was fretful at times, his manner imperious, and he had a fashion of assuming that the world must be ruled according to his individual whim. It was only the natural outcome of those long weeks when his mother had hung over him,

eager to anticipate every wish of the boy before whom the future loomed so dark. As soon as the fear of darkness was dispelled, however, it was discovered that the effect upon his character had not been wholly improving. Otherwise he was an attractive boy, with the well-bred homeliness that is always so pleasing. His gray eyes were steady and true, his lips firm and tightly closed.

Now that his various bones and ligaments were growing together again, it became needful to think about study once more. Though he was coming back to something of his old habits, it would be long and long before he was quite sound again, and the doctors had prudently forbidden school life for a boy who would be certain to be in the forefront of the athletic fray. Kingsley raged, both openly and in spirit, at the idea of a tutor; but his father stood firm, and, for a month after their return to the city, Mr. Barrett had been weighing the merits of the various applicants for his liberal salary, only to have one candidate after another rejected by his imperious young son and heir.

“But you must have somebody, Rex,” his

mother urged. "It is time the matter was settled, for your father is in a hurry to go to work on his new symphony, and he can't do anything until you are off his mind. Why don't you want this Mr. Sotheran?"

"Milksop," Kingsley replied concisely, as he took another muffin.

"Mr. Edwards, then?"

"Cad, and I know he eats with his knife."

"But he isn't going to eat with you."

"No; but I don't want to have him around. He gives me the blue wiggles."

"What do you think of Mr. Hill?"

"His neckties would drive me to drink."

"But, Rex, you must have somebody."

Kingsley put both elbows on the table, rested his chin in his hands and eyed her benignly.

"Oh, come off there, Mater! What's the use of my doing lessons? I didn't have to fuss about them, last year."

"No; but you are strong enough now."

"I sha'n't be, if I have to get to work with one of those fellows. I've a deadly sinking inside myself at the very idea, and I know studying will make my fourth rib fetch loose again. I don't feel any drawing to go to col-

lege, so let's call off the tutor-hunt and have some fun."

It was at this epoch that Harry Arterburn applied for the position of tutor to Kingsley Barrett.

"As I have been remarking, every day for a month," Kingsley observed at dinner, that night; "I haven't the slightest hankering to have a tutor, and I think the pater would much better save his money and send it to foreign lands to educate some other heathen. Still, if he is bound to support a worthy young man, my vote goes to this Arterburn chap. He is presentable, and his muscles look hard. I want a man who would be worth the trouble of knocking down, if he needed it. No; I don't want that Mr. Blakeslee. He may know things; but he is too flabby. It's got to be Mr. Arterburn, or nobody."

And Mr. Arterburn it was.

"You needn't think I'm anything of a grind," Kingsley explained, with dispassionate frankness, on the morning that his tutor assumed his new duties. "The pater says I've got to go to college, and I suppose that means you are to put me there. You'll have it all to do, though. I am willing you should try to

punch some ideas into my head; but I can't promise that they will stay there. If I furnish the brain, it is your business to fill it up. Now fire ahead with your old Xenophon."

For a week, he was as good as his word. He sat passive and docile under Harry's teaching, lent a politely attentive ear to his explanations and promptly forgot them all before the next morning arrived. He was courteous and unruffled by the rebukes of his tutor; but they jogged his intellect as little as they jarred his temper, and Harry Arterburn left him, day after day, more and more at a loss how, in the space of one revolving year, he could put one thousand dollars' worth of scholarship into the brain of his wayward pupil.

"Harry, you are tired," Nathalie said to him, one noon, after she had watched him for a time.

He was certainly very tired; but he pulled himself together with an effort.

"No; I'm not. I am only trying to sort out my ideas for my lecture, this afternoon."

"Let your ideas go. It is your five o'clock day; isn't it? Those students won't know what you are saying, as late as that in the

afternoon. How did your boy get on with his verbs, this morning?"

"The boy was on hand; but the verbs were conspicuous by their absence."

"Didn't he know them?"

"Of course not."

"Why?"

"Too much trouble to learn them."

"But why don't you tell him to learn them?" she asked.

"Tell him!" Harry's accent was circumflex. "I did mention to him that I should be grateful for a little study." He laughed; then he lapsed into moody silence. "Nathalie," he said at length; "I believe I am losing my grip."

"Did you ever have any?" she inquired saucily. Then, as she saw his face redden at her words, she rose and crossed the room to his side. "Honestly, I didn't mean that, Harry. Of course, your tutoring is all right. The boy needn't be so lazy. Is he stupid?"

"No. If he were, there would be some hope for him. He learns fast enough, when he chooses."

"Then what is the matter? Doesn't he like you?" she questioned bluntly.

"I don't think he takes the trouble to like or dislike me, one way or the other."

"Why don't you speak to his father?"

"What's the use? If I can't get hold of him, myself, all the fathers in Christendom won't do the business for me. No; I must put it through alone, or not at all."

"Harry, it is a burning shame for you to be wasting your time and wearing yourself out over that boy. I'd like to get hold of him. I'd put some sense into him, and knock some of the nonsense out. You'd better let me go in your place, for a time or two; then you would find a meek boy, or my name is not Nathalie Arterburn."

"What's the fuss now, Nathalie?" Ralph inquired, as he came clattering into the room. "Lunch ready? Where is Peggy?"

"I'm here," Peggy responded from a distance. "I do wish, Nathalie, that you would come and tie my hair, and not keep fretting about that stupid Barrett boy."

Nathalie obediently vanished, and Ralph took her place before his older brother.

"Say, Harry ——"

"What now?"

"I've just smashed the window in my room,

did it with my shoe. I'm sorry, for it is a hugeable pane; but I was shying my shoes at the closet door, and one of them went off on the wrong tangent."

"Sorry. Don't do it again, for glass costs good money."

"I know that. Cousin Eudora said I ought to have a good sound whipping for being so careless, and, if she were in your place, she would give me one. She probably thought I was Fizzums. And, Harry ——"

"Well?"

"One of my new shoes has split out at the side. I don't think it could have been made of very good leather. I was kicking football, this morning, and came whack against the wall, and it popped open like a torpedo,—the shoe, not the wall."

"Can't it be mended?"

"I don't believe so. It's all saw-tooth along the edges, where it hit on a sharp stone."

"Harry!" The door from the kitchen flew open, and the thin, sharp face of Cousin Eudora Evelina appeared in the crack. "I forgot to tell you, this morning, that the sugar and potatoes are gone, and that we shall need more flour, to-morrow. While you

are about it, you might as well order some butter and some cornstarch. My soul! Those children do have appetites to beat anything I ever saw in Vermont. Seems as if things just flew down their throats, without doing them one smitch of good."

Harry assented; then he sighed a little, as he took out his memorandum book and wrote down the requisitions. There was no doubt of the fact that it took money to support a family of five in New York. There was something from his father's estate, although Mr. Arterburn had been a man who lived expensively and wholly in the financial present. For the rest, Harry's salary at the university was only a small one, and he realized with a sudden pang that it was imperative for him to earn the extra thousand a year.

He had come home from the Barretts', that noon, tired and discouraged, sure that there was little use in his attempting to do anything with his vexatious pupil. He objected to the idea of wasting his own time and Mr. Barrett's money; he objected to wearing out his nervous system and his temper in a futile effort to do somebody some good. On his way home, he had half resolved to resign, the next morn-

ing; and he had been pondering over the matter, when Nathalie had roused him. With a little care and planning, he had felt that he would be able to make both ends meet, even without the Barrett thousand. The main expenses would be their rent and Nathalie's tuition at the good school he had chosen for her, and these could be met from the family income. His salary would do the rest.

Sugar. Potatoes. Flour. Shoes. Glass.
Butter. Cornstarch.

He shut his book with a snap, rose and tramped up and down the floor. Then he picked up his Xenophon and went away to his own room.

The next morning, Kingsley Barrett found his tutor more firm and painstaking than ever, and he reciprocated by upsetting a bottle of red ink all over his tutor's left-hand cuff.

CHAPTER FOUR

“NO, Fizzums; you can't go with me.”
“But I wants to go.”

“You can't. You must stay with Cousin Eudora.”

“I don't like Cousin Vedowa. She kisses me on mine mouf, an' her mouf is all soft.” Fizzums demonstrated his meaning by twisting his pink lips into a protruding knob.

“Never mind, dear. Cousin Eudora likes little boys, and she likes to cuddle them. Just think how she rocks you and tells you sleepy stories!”

“But I doesn't want asleepy stowies now, wight in ve middle of ve day,” Fizzums explained politely. “I wants to go in ve cars wiv you.”

Nathalie frowned thoughtfully. She had promised to escort one of her new school friends to the photographer, that day. Fizzums, whom the family record named Frank, for certain obvious reasons would be out of

place at the photographer's, and Fizzums had asserted his desire to accompany her. Ralph was out, Peggy was too unreliable to be left in charge of her young brother, and Cousin Eudora, busy making a pudding, had explicitly requested Fizzums to depart from the kitchen.

As a rule, the tough old spinster softened, whenever she came in contact with Fizzums; but there were hours when his baby blandishments failed to move her from her wonted sternness. Just now, there was a coolness between Eudora Evelina and Fizzums, a coolness caused by Eudora Evelina's finding her decorous gaiter-boots floating despondently in the bath tub. It is not in the mind of mortal woman to relish the imputation that her foot-gear resemble scows.

"Vere was only a bottomful an' a half of water in ve tub," Fizzums explained lucidly; "an' ve shoes looked so funny, just like two Noah an' ve Arks, only vere wasn't any nefalunt."

Nathalie drew a long breath. Then she began again.

"Fizzums, if you will be a good boy and stay here and play by yourself, when Nathalie comes back, she'll tell you a long, long story."

“Five, sevewal stowies?”

“No; one great big story, all about giants and choo-choo cars, and fairies with green and gold crowns on their heads.”

Fizzums smiled in token of acquiescence.

“An’ Jacob’s ladder,” he emended; “an’ all ve nangels goin’ up an’ down atween here an’ heaven.”

“Yes, if you’d rather.”

“I wouldn’t ravver eiver of vem. I wants bofe. Ve nangels can come down in ve choo-choo cars wiv ve giant, an’ go up ve ladder wiv ve faiwies flyin’ all wound beside vem. I’ll build ve ladder now, Nathalie; an’ ven you can sit on ve top of it an’ tell me all ve stowy.”

Nathalie lingered long enough to see the foundations of the ladder in place. Then she left Fizzums engrossed in his blocks, and went away to put on her hat.

In her own room, she paused for a moment to look about her; then, crossing to the window, she rested her elbows on the broad sill and stared out on the picture before her. Mrs. Myers had been wise in her choice of their new home; the view alone was almost worth the cost of the rent. On account of Harry’s

university duties, they needed to be far up town, and this apartment was a new one, high up in a block overlooking the river. From Nathalie's room, she could gaze away and away up the blue Hudson, and she never tired of watching the procession of yachts and barges and dignified steamers that moved up and down the shining stripe of water, nor of seeing the changing shadows over the Palisades and the higher crests beyond. She had never watched the passing boats till then; they fired her imagination, and yet they seemed to quiet her girlish restlessness.

After her quarters in the great, old-fashioned house in Chesterton, the room behind her seemed too small to deserve the name. At first, she had marveled at the economy of space, at the neat dovetailing together of the foot of the bed and the end of the chiffonier whose open drawers forbade any approach to the closet door. Then, as she came to a realizing sense that a stray overshoe might act as a barricade between door and window, she grew impatient and raged in spirit. Order was by no means Nathalie's first law. She could never see the reason for hanging up a gown at night, when there was any chance of her

wishing to put it on again, the next day. Her chiffonier was arranged like a pile of books on a table, with strict attention to the laws of gravitation. The higher the drawer, the smaller were the things in it. Beyond this simple method, chaos reigned.

Turning away from the window, Nathalie proceeded to gather up her belongings, preparatory to her trip down town. Her hat was easily found, since she had left it hanging on the gas fixture, that morning; but her search for her gloves cost some mental effort and many steps. One glove proved to be in the box with her darning cotton; the other eluded her vigilance until she suddenly remembered that she had found it in the kitchen, that noon, and had stuck it into her belt for safe keeping. She was still hunting for her purse, when the bell rang; and her friend was kept waiting during a long twenty minutes while Nathalie rummaged her drawers in search of the missing property. Nevertheless, strange to say, when at last she presented herself, she was as trim and dainty as a girl could be. Nathalie must be neat at any cost. Her chaos was confined to her possessions; it never assailed her person.

“So sorry to have kept you waiting, Hilda!” she said apologetically. “Truly, I couldn’t help it. I lost most of my things, and those I could find, were the ones I didn’t need. Now just wait till I have a look at Fizzums.”

“At—what?”

Nathalie laughed.

“At my small brother. His name is Frank; but he began calling himself Fizzums, and the rest of us have taken it up. As a rule, I don’t like nicknames; but this one fits too well to be forgotten. I want to see that he isn’t in any dire mischief. I left him constructing a Jacob’s ladder out of his blocks; but there is no telling what he may be about by now.”

However, Fizzums was absorbed in cutting out a glorious hierarchy of newspaper angels, and Nathalie left him to his own devices, in tranquil unconsciousness of the fact that, within an hour, the bluing from the laundry and the ink bottle from Harry’s desk would be called into requisition to paint the faces of the heavenly host.

“I never get tired of New York, when I am down here,” she said enthusiastically, as the two friends finally turned away from the

photographer's door. "It isn't nearly time for dinner. Can't we go somewhere else?"

"Where do you want to go?"

"Anywhere. It is all new to me, but I suppose you know it by heart. I love to walk and walk, and see new things. When I get rich, I'll have a tent in Madison Square, and watch things go on around me."

"You'll soon get sick of it," Hilda returned, with the assumption of wellbred indifference that marks the western girl who is spending a few months at an up-town finishing school. "I used to feel just that way; but now I hate to come down town, it is so noisy and crowded."

"Maybe it is," Nathalie responded sturdily; "but I love it, all the same. I like to see it rushing around me, and I love the feeling that I am a part of this great, rich city."

"It isn't all so rich."

"Not rich, perhaps; but everybody seems so comfortable and busy, and with money to spend. Just look at these shops!"

"That's because you don't know," Hilda said, with a little air of conscious superiority which irritated Nathalie. "Over in the East Side, they just live in heaps, and cook in their

fire-escapes because their houses are too small to hold them."

"Who does that?" Nathalie demanded.

"Everybody over in the East Side."

"Where is that?"

"Oh, over by the river, somewhere."

"And people live like that, here in New York?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen them?"

"No; of course not."

"How do you know, then?"

"Why, everybody knows it."

"I didn't."

"Well, you are from the country."

"Yes, and you are from the West."

For a minute, both chins were tilted at an aggressive angle. Then Nathalie laughed.

"We can cry quits on that. You have been here a good deal longer than I have, though, so I suppose I shall have to believe you. Why don't the rich people help them?"

"Some do; but most of them form trusts and grind the face of the poor."

Nathalie halted so abruptly that she nearly upset a testy old gentleman who was close at her heels.

“Where did you get that lingo?” she asked irreverently.

“It isn’t a lingo; it’s the solemn truth.”

Hilda’s tone betrayed her exasperation. She had been a good deal impressed by Nathalie’s self-reliant manner, and it had seemed to her that it might be politic to make a friend of this new pupil who bore herself so independently in the ordeal of the first weeks at a strange school. Nathalie was good to look at; she dressed with a tasteful simplicity which might be the sign of riches so unlimited as to be cloying. Moreover, her brother was known to be an instructor in the university and a man from whom any schoolgirl might be glad to have a smile, when they met in the street.

Accordingly, Hilda had made overtures which, it must be confessed, Nathalie had received rather cavalierly; and the trip to the photographer had been part of a plan to awe this self-assured young woman from the country. Nevertheless, much as Nathalie loved pretty things, she had been a little disgusted at the necklace and the lace frills with which Hilda had garnished her round, bare shoulders; and she had privately resolved that, in her next letter to Mildred, she would

propound the question whether seventeen-year-old schoolgirls in Boston were accustomed to wear diamond stars in their hair.

But, even if finery failed to impress Nathalie, a thorough knowledge of New York might do so; and Hilda found it rather irritating to have her kindly information termed a lingo.

"Professor Hale said so," she went on a little sullenly. "He lectured to us, last spring, once a week; and he told us a lot about such things. He says that there is a place over here that is the thickest spot in the world."

"It must be on top of a mountain, then. How can we get there?"

"Oh, I suppose some of these little cars run over there."

"Come on. Let's go."

It was Hilda's turn to stare.

"Nathalie Arterburn! You wouldn't!"

"Why not? I'd like to see it."

"I wouldn't go over there for worlds on worlds."

"I don't see why not."

"You'd catch things." Hilda spoke with the toothy distinctness of utter disgust.

"Catch what? I'm not afraid."

“Catch diseases, smallpox and—and—batrachians.”

Nathalie's laugh rang out so blithely that a passer-by turned his head to look after her.

“If I meant bacteria, Hilda, I'd say so, and not talk about frogs when I meant microbes. Never mind about it now; but, some day, I am going into your East Side, or End, or Corner, or whatever it is, to see things for myself. Maybe I can do somebody some good.” And she kept her word.

Over his salad, that night, Mr. Barrett laughed to himself. Then he looked across at his wife.

“I saw a girl after your own heart, to-day, Babe.”

“Who was that?”

“I don't know. I saw her twice. The first time was away down town. I didn't notice her till she laughed, such a jolly laugh that I turned to stare at her. She reminded me a little of you, a hearty, wholesome girl with a mop of light hair and a great mouth full of hard white teeth that looked as if they could eat nails, not pretty——”

“Thank you, dear!” his wife interpolated.

“That's all right. You know you didn't

look any too beautiful, the day we first met. But this girl attracted me. Then she happened to be in the same car with me, coming up town, and I couldn't keep my eyes off her, she seemed so exactly what our little Ted would have been, if she had lived. She was just the right age. I was up at the head of the car, and she was near the door. The car was mostly full of young men, and, half-way up town, an old negro woman came in, a dreadfully frowsy old negro with her arms so full of bundles that she couldn't hang on to the strap. The men all buried themselves behind their papers; but, after the woman had wobbled for a minute, my girl jumped up and offered her the place. Of course, then the men all came out from their papers and stood up; but she turned scarlet and cocked up her head and assured them that she was quite able to stand, even if they weren't. One man tried to urge her a little; but she nearly took his head off. She was a peppery little soul; but they deserved all they got."

Kingsley came out of a brown study and took his elbows off the table.

"I say," he remarked slowly; "I believe I should like to know that girl."

CHAPTER FIVE

“MIGHT I inquire what you are about, Peggy?”

“Looking for my best stockings.”

“Well, keep out of my chiffonier.”

“It’s not your chiffonier, any more than it is mine.”

On sufferance and from stern necessity, Peggy occupied one half of Nathalie’s bed and a fraction of the closet ; but the chiffonier was beyond her domains, and Nathalie had felt no sisterly thrill of pleasure when she had beheld Peggy’s hands rooting among her possessions.

“You have no right to touch my things, Peggy,” she said with some asperity. “Your stockings are not in my chiffonier.”

“I’d like to know how you can tell what is in that mess,” Peggy returned disdainfully.

Nathalie threw down her pen and turned upon her young sister.

“Peggy, I’ll thank you to go out of this

room. I can't finish my letter, with you making such a fuss."

"I want my stockings."

"Then look in the proper place for them."

"Where's that?"

"In the bureau in Ralph's room."

"How do you know they are there?"

"Because they belong there."

"That's no sign. Your stockings are all tangled up with your neckties, unwound and all."

The most chaotic of mortals will resent any accusation of disorder. Nathalie rose and crossed the room, her eyes flashing.

"Peggy, go out of this room at once."

Peggy plumped herself into the middle of the bed, laughing like a mocking elf.

"Why?"

"Because I say so." Nathalie was quite aware that her tone of assumed authority never failed to irritate her young sister; yet, for the moment, she was powerless to suppress it.

"You aren't my mother, and this is my room as much as it is yours, so I intend to stay as long as I choose," Peggy replied tranquilly.

"All right; but you may end by staying a little longer."

There was a swift flank movement, a short, sharp struggle; then Peggy found herself sitting on the closet floor, listening to the click of the key, as it turned in the lock. The closet was lighted by a small ground-glass window which opened on the court, and although the resources for entertainment were limited, Nathalie knew that an hour of captivity would be attended by no serious results. Accordingly, she turned a deaf ear to the protesting thumps on the panels and the vindictive threats of appeal to Harry, and, gathering up her writing materials, she went out of the room and closed the door behind her.

"I'm not just sure whether she is at home, or not," Ralph was saying. "Come in and sit down, and I'll see."

"Who is it that you want, Ralph? Oh, Hilda, I'm ever so glad to see you. Do take off your hat and stay."

"I really oughtn't to stay." Hilda's tone was reluctant, though she had come with the express intention of taking up her abode in Nathalie's parlor until such time as she had succeeded in gaining an introduction to Nath-

alie's older brother. Unfortunately for Hilda, it chanced that Nathalie's older brother had gone out of town for the day. Furthermore, it chanced that Nathalie's younger brother suddenly elected to stay in the house and help to entertain his sister's guest who was no ardent lover of small boys.

"It's such a glorious day," Hilda chattered, while Nathalie took possession of her hat and coat. "I couldn't bear to stay inside the house, so I thought I would run over here and have a peep at your lovely view."

Ralph hitched his chair a bit nearer the broad window seat where Hilda had perched herself.

"We had a fine view here, this morning," he chuckled. "The milkman's dog and the one that rides in the grocery cart pitched on each other, right down by our door. Jiminy! How the fur flew! The grocer dog had the worst of it, for the other took him by the throat and——"

"Hilda," Nathalie interrupted; "this is the pillow I was talking about. Isn't it a pretty one?"

"Did you make it?"

"No; I don't see much sense in fancy work.

Life isn't long enough to make it worth while to pull out threads just for the sake of darning some more threads into the holes, and I don't care to spend a month in embroidering half a sweet pea. I like to see the things, when they are done; but I'd rather go without them than make them."

"Yes; but you can do them at odd times, and if you watch your chance and get your materials at bargain sales, they make such nice, cheap Christmas presents."

"Want to know what I'd like for Christmas?" Ralph inquired, taking the burden of conversation upon himself once more.

Hilda manifested no overweening curiosity in the matter, however, and Ralph turned to Nathalie.

"Want to know, Nathalie?"

"What is it, Ralph?"

"A whopping great bulldog that could lick everything."

"You dreadful boy!" Hilda bestowed upon him a glance of disapproval.

"What's the row? Don't you like dogs?"

"Yes, nice, neat little dogs that you can pet, but not bulldogs."

"I know the kind of dogs girls like," Ralph

returned, well pleased to be holding up his end of the conversation so easily. "You want those hairy little beasts with poppy eyes and tongues too long to stay in their mouths. Now, if you ——"

"Ralph," Nathalie asked abruptly; "isn't to-day the day of your football game?"

"Yes."

"How does it happen you aren't there?"

"Didn't want to go."

"I thought you always went to football games."

"Not unless they are good ones. Can you play football, Hilda?"

"Miss Lancaster," Nathalie corrected him.

"Well, Miss Lancaster, then. Can you play football?"

"Of course not," Hilda replied primly.

"Why not? Nathalie can."

Nathalie's color came.

"Ralph!" she expostulated.

"You needn't pretend. You know you told me how once you and Mildred ——"

"You ought to have known my Cousin Mildred, Hilda," Nathalie interrupted hastily. "We were together, last year. Now she is at school in Boston."

"Why didn't she come to New York?" Hilda asked critically.

"Why didn't you go to Boston?" Ralph retorted, heedless of the hand which Nathalie rested on his shoulder.

"Because I preferred New York."

"Maybe that's the way she felt about Boston. Ouch! You pinch, Nathalie! Where going?"

Nathalie had risen.

"Into my room. Hilda, don't you want to see some pictures of Chesterton?"

"I'll get them for you," Ralph suggested with unwonted alacrity.

"No, dear; we'll go."

"All right." And Ralph prepared to accompany them.

Nathalie eyed him despairingly, Hilda with open disgust. On the threshold of her room, Nathalie turned back.

"Ralph, I wish you would see to Fizzums for a while. Cousin Eudora is out."

"Where is Hal?"

"He went away, you know, and won't be back till dinner-time."

"Fizzums is all right."

"Don't be too sure. When he is so quiet,

it is always well to look out for him, because he is certain to be in some mischief."

As Ralph turned away, Hilda drew a sigh of relief.

"You poor, dear thing, how can you ever stand it?" she asked.

"Stand what?" Nathalie's honest eyes looked straight into the eyes of her guest.

"Stand that dreadful boy."

"Ralph? Why, what's the matter with Ralph?"

"Oh,—nothing," Hilda answered evasively, for she was learning that, when Nathalie took that tone, it was never well to pursue the subject under discussion at the time.

Inside the room, the two girls were at peace and troubled by no hostile demonstrations from the closet. For reasons of her own, Peggy had no wish to be disturbed just then. Accordingly, she maintained a discreet silence, sitting with her ear against the keyhole, in the hope of hearing some adverse comment upon herself which would add color to the story she was preparing for Harry's ears. Quite to her disappointment, however, the talk was impersonal and uninteresting. Nathalie had entirely forgotten her captive, and

was putting all her energy into the effort to entertain her guest who of a sudden had grown absent-minded and restless.

Suddenly Hilda sprang up.

"It is so warm here. Let's go out and take a walk."

"It will have to be a little one," Nathalie demurred.

"Why?"

"Because I promised Harry that I would hear Ralph say over his lessons."

"Never mind. That can wait. Come."

Nathalie picked up her hat from a chair.

"For just half an hour, then," she conceded; and Peggy, listening, chuckled to herself. Half an hour would exactly suffice for the completion of her task.

The half-hour was a long one. In the clear, crispy October air, the time passed rapidly and unheeded, and Hilda had no trouble in luring her friend along the Boulevard until the university buildings were far behind them. Then, with a glance at her watch and a little horrified exclamation over the hour, she turned back and passed the library again just in season to meet Harry Arterburn, as he started to climb the steps.

"It must be very nice to have a brother of that sort," she said enviously, five minutes later.

"Yes, I like all my brothers. Haven't you any brothers, Hilda?"

"Yes, three or four; but they aren't much use. Your brother is perfectly elegant. I don't believe he ever swore in his life."

"I should hope not," Nathalie responded fervently.

"Mine do, and smoke in the parlor, too; all but one and he is a prohibitionist. Father says he is the worst of the lot."

It was nearly time for dinner when Nathalie reached home, so, tossing her hat on to her bed, she called Ralph and fell to work on his lessons. Harry's will was law, and Nathalie had promised to oversee the school work of her young brother who possessed the bookish tendencies of healthy thirteen, and needed to be goaded up the ladder of learning. They were still toiling over the Plains of Abraham, when the door opened and Harry came into the room. A moment later, Cousin Eudora Evelina summoned them to dinner.

"It's the queerest thing," she said, as they took their places; "but I haven't seen that

Peggy since noon. She hasn't gone out, because her hat and coat are here; but, when I came home, I hunted high and low for her. I wanted her to set the table; but she had hiked herself off out of the way. She'll get round now, though. My soul! You can trust that Peggy to show herself, when meal-time comes."

Nathalie roused herself from a reverie.

"Who is that you're talking about? Peggy?" she asked.

"Yes. I haven't set eyes on her since lunch."

"Merciful me! I locked her up!" And, rising, Nathalie rushed from the table.

She was back again in a moment, however. Her eyes were blazing; but her anger was mingled with uncontrollable mirth.

"Come here, all of you," she said brokenly. "I shut her into the closet for prying into my chiffonier where she didn't belong. I only meant to keep her there for a few minutes; but Hilda's coming made me forget her. I wish I hadn't, now. Anyway, I rather think I have had the worst of it."

She led the way to the closet and threw open the door, then stepped aside to allow the



others to view the ruin which Peggy had wrought. Carefully turned inside out and reversed so that they hung by their hems, a row of skirts adorned one wall; the other was covered with the accompanying bodices, also wrong side out and dangling by one sleeve. The contents of the shelf, including Nathalie's best hat, were heaped on the floor, and their place occupied by the material which usually filled the shoe-bag. The shoe-bag itself was missing. In its place hung the empty piece-bag; and across the back of the closet was a deep, comfortable couch of the débris from the loosened rolls. On this couch, Peggy lay in tranquil slumber.

Roused by the sudden glare of light, she sat up and rubbed open her sleepy eyes, while her hair and the back of her rough cloth gown bristled stiffly with the scraps of Nathalie's summer wardrobe.

Cousin Eudora Evelina stared from the yawning child to the dismantled closet.

“Well, heavens to Betsey!” she ejaculated.

CHAPTER SIX

“HARRY, I’m tired of girls,” Nathalie said abruptly, that night.

“Is that the reason you tried to make away with Peggy?”

Nathalie laughed, as she came forward to the fire and settled herself on the rug.

“Poor Peggy! I meant to leave her to meditate on her sins for half an hour or so; that was all.”

“I’m not so sure that it is altogether a good thing for you to try to discipline the younger ones, Nathalie,” her brother said thoughtfully.

“But they do need it most awfully, sometimes,” she urged.

“I don’t doubt it; but you aren’t enough older to make a success of it.”

“Neither are you,” she retorted.

“I am perfectly aware of that fact.”

“Then who will do it?”

“What about Cousin Eudora?”

Nathalie made a wry face.

"She's no use. Her head shakes corner-wise, when she is trying to be extra impressive, and she fairly sizzles her S's. When she is scolding one of us, the rest all giggle, and that spoils the moral effect."

"I don't quite understand Cousin Eudora," Harry said thoughtfully.

"I do. She is fearfully and wonderfully made, and she is funny; but she's not half bad, Harry," Nathalie responded with unexpected generosity. "She will never be much of a redeeming influence on me; but she is a most mortal good cook, and she manages Fizzums beautifully. Ralph is a dear, and doesn't need much managing; but I do just long to get my fingers on Peggy and give her a good shaking now and then."

"What is the matter with Peggy?"

Nathalie looked up with a little laugh.

"Oh, I don't want to tell tales, Harry. It is bad manners."

Harry bent forward and stirred the fire. There was a perplexed look in his dark blue eyes, a slight frown between the straight brown brows.

"What makes you wizzle up your face like

that?" his sister demanded. "It isn't a bit becoming to you; and your glasses will drop off into the fire, if you aren't careful."

He laughed in spite of himself.

"You are a trial, Nathalie. Where is your respect for your older brother? But the fact is that I am trying to decide whether you belong to Peggy's epoch, or to my own."

"To yours, of course. Peggy is nothing but a child. What difference does it make, though, where I belong, as long as I am here?"

"I don't know whether to encourage you in discussing Peggy's vagaries, or to shut you both up, for a pair of quarrelsome youngsters."

Nathalie looked slightly offended.

"I don't care anything about discussing Peggy," she said shortly.

"No; but I do, and I rather think I'll do better to talk her over with you than with Cousin Eudora." He bent over and took her face between his strong, slim hands. "Don't be cross at me, Nathalie. Really, it is no joke for a fellow of my age to have to bring up Peggy, and I need all the help I can get."

If Nathalie's patience was short, her impatience was always even shorter, and her face cleared at his words.

“I don't mean to be cranky, Harry. I know you have your hands full, with us all on your soul. I ought to help you, and I meant to, honestly meant to, to-day; but it didn't seem to come out just right.”

“No; I should say not. Do you know, Nathalie, it's a queer thing, but I have been watching you for two months now, and you and Ralph never seem to have any squabbles.”

“Of course not. Ralph is a dear,” she broke in enthusiastically.

“And we don't.”

“How could we, Harry?” Turning, she looked at him in honest surprise.

Her look did him a world of good. After a morning when Kingsley had been peculiarly exasperating, after an afternoon of looking up some bad investments made by his father and finding them worse than he had supposed, after a lecture when he knew that his entire class of students was ripe for hilarious mutiny, he had come home to discover domestic war. There had been many hours since his return from Europe when he had seriously questioned whether or not he were strong enough to hold his family together, whether, after all, it would not be better to send the little ones

back to Vermont and put Nathalie into a good boarding-school. Such a mood was upon him, to-night. In the midst of it, he found her unexpected loyalty most comforting.

He wanted to say this to her, to give her some hint of the pleasure he was learning to take in her company; but, being only a man, and a young man at that, he merely said,—

“Like Cousin Eudora, you aren't half bad, Nathalie. I believe I am rather glad to have you here. But you and Peggy do fight.”

“Yes,” Nathalie assented tranquilly; “we fight like the cats of Kilkenny, and that was why I tried to exterminate her in the closet.”

“Well, what do you fight for?”

Nathalie rested her chin on her fists and stared into the fire.

“Peggy is trying at times,” she observed.

“Possibly.”

“And she says I am awfully hard to get on with,” she pursued meditatively.

“Very likely.”

She bounced around and sat facing him.

“Do you think so, too, Harry?” she asked indignantly.

“I don't; but I can see why Peggy does.”

“Why?”

"You do lord it over her, sister mine. You seem to think she is going to mind you; and she isn't. Peggy finds it hard to mind anybody; she isn't going to give in to a girl only five years older than she is. You manage Ralph splendidly; but you know you do bully Peggy." Harry's laugh took all the sting out of his words.

"I don't know but I do," she confessed, after a pause.

"But what is the use?"

"To make her behave herself."

"It doesn't do one bit of good."

"You just watch her in our room for a while," she began tempestuously; then, as she saw his lips straighten, she checked herself. "It's not fair for you to have all this worry," she said remorsefully. "When you come home, tired out, it is a perfect shame for you to have to settle our fights. Truly, I will try to get on better with Peggy."

"I wish I knew what the matter is with Peggy. She sets Fizzums and Ralph by the ears; but she is always meek enough, when I am here."

"Because she doesn't dare be anything else," Nathalie said flatly. "You are the

only soul in New York that she stands in awe of, and she puts her best foot forward, whenever you are in sight. She's not really sneaky nor ugly, only lawless and cross-grained. I believe I don't get on well with girls, anyway."

There was a despondent note in her voice, and Harry glanced at her swiftly.

"That's a bad state of affairs, sister mine. Whose fault is it?"

"Mine, I suppose," she said grimly. "The odd one is generally the one to blame, and I am coming to the conclusion that I'm odd."

"What is the matter, Nathalie?"

She looked up, grateful for his accent of quiet respect. Already she had regretted her words, for she had a girlish horror of being laughed at for ill-considered confidences. His tone restored her trust in him.

"It's at the school," she confessed. "I never had any trouble before; but here the girls aren't like any I have ever known."

"Not even Hilda?" Harry asked teasingly, for he had felt some amusement at the sudden intimacy between the two girls.

"Hilda is the worst of the lot. All she cares for is men, men, men! Harry Arter-

burn, I have even heard those girls counting up the men they know to bow to, here in New York, and, to-night, Hilda let it out that she has been scheming for an introduction to you, so as to get ahead of another girl. I think it is perfectly disgusting. And they are so silly, and their jokes are so flat. I like fun, as well as any girl; but I just hate the way these girls talk and giggle, and plan how they can get around old Fräulein Sohmer, when she takes them to places. I believe I should like a good, sensible boy for a friend, not a young man, but a great, cubby boy without any manners and quiddle-de-diddles."

"I wish you had one, Nathalie. I suppose most girls do giggle and prink. The honest fact is, I supposed you would do it, too, as soon as you had the chance; but it's a mercy to me that you don't."

Nathalie shook her head.

"No; I suppose I am more than half boy, Harry. I wish I did care more for the things girls like; but I'd a great deal rather grow up into a college boy than a Fifth Avenue bud. I'd like the gowns and the going to things; but I never could put up with all the

flummery and fuss that goes with it. Am I queer, Harry? I don't want to be."

"It's a kind of queer that I like, Nathalie."

"Oh, dear, then I am queer! I did hope you would say I wasn't." She stared at the grate despondently. "Harry, I won't be queer; I hate it, hate it even worse than I do the way those girls perform. If it's necessary, I suppose I can perform, too; but it doesn't seem natural, somehow."

"Perhaps it is because they are older than you are," he suggested.

She made a wry face.

"Then I'll have to grow up to it, some time or other. I won't. I'd rather go on playing dolls till I'm in my dotage. It isn't sensible, Harry, this acting as if you were grown up, and flirting, and all that stuff, when a girl is in her teens. In that other school where I used to be, we played basket ball and tennis and those things. All these girls do, is to prink, and then go out for a walk. I wish I liked it; but I don't. It's even worse than the everlasting croquet they played in Chesterton."

Her brother looked puzzled at her outburst.

"What do you want to do, Nathalie? I

mean, if you had everything your own way."

"I don't know; I'm not sure. I want to amount to something, to do something that really counts."

"But what?"

She shook her head in despair over her own discontent.

"That's the worse part of it all, Harry; I really don't know enough to know. All I do know is that this other doesn't satisfy me. I feel like a fish out of water, trying to get a long breath and flopping about without its doing me any good. I'm as strong as a bear. I love to be out and about, and I'd like to make myself count for things. It makes me cross and fretty to settle down here, all the time."

"But there is plenty to do here."

"No; there isn't. Cousin Eudora does everything; she says I only get in her way. Peggy gets in mine, and we have fights. If it were not for you and Ralph, I should die; and you are off, ever so much of the time."

"Homesick, Nathalie?" Harry asked in surprise.

She lifted her head, and he could see the tears shining on her cheeks.

“No; I’m not homesick. I haven’t had anything to be homesick for, since papa died, and I have forgotten how it would feel. But I am lonely. There’s no reason I should be; it’s my own fault, I know, but it is just as bad. You see, I don’t belong anywhere. Fizzums and Cousin Eudora are great chums, Peggy has her friends and Ralph has his. Sometimes I feel as if I must go out in the park and play with those boys; but I know I’d only be in the way. I have tried hard to get on with the girls at school; but they are from the West, and they have lots of money, and they think I am poky and queer.” Once more her chin went down on her fists.

“What about me?”

“You are grown up and busy. You have the university and the Barretts and lots and lots of friends.”

“And a young sister,” he supplemented gravely.

“Yes, only you don’t need her.”

“Why not?”

“You have enough else without me.”

He rose and, bending over, pulled her to her

feet, linking his arm in hers, as she stood beside him.

“Put that idea out of your head, at once and forever, sister mine. We ought to be the closest kind of chums. All my life, ever since I was grown up, I have envied other fellows for having sisters. They always seemed to me to have such good times together, doing things and going to places. When I came home, I was astonished to see how you had grown up. I had supposed I should find you a little girl. But even then, I didn't think you would care to do things with me. I honestly thought you would rather be let alone to go your own way. One doesn't know just how a ready-made sister is going to turn out.”

Nathalie's lips quivered a little. It was four years since any one had spoken to her in that tone, four years since she had known what it meant really to belong to any one. Until lately, she had supposed that she did not care, that she was self-reliant enough to go through the world alone. Since she had come to New York, however, she had learned her mistake. It was enough for her to watch the three younger children together. Disagree as they might, there was always between them

the strong bond of kinship which comes with the growing up together in one household. Between them linked with this bond, and Harry absorbed in his professional duties, she stood alone, and the loneliness was wearing upon her.

With girlish impulsiveness, she had laid down her heart at Harry's feet, on the day of her reaching New York. His looks, his speech, his dress, a certain quiet dignity that marked his bearing, all had seemed to her to be beyond criticism. She studied him with the aloofness of a stranger; she admired him, respected him and felt a good deal of awe of him. It was not until a month later, however, after she had seen him in the wear and tear of daily life and of the management of three irrepressible children, that she actually loved him. Then, all at once, she realized that Harry Arterburn, her very own brother, had suddenly stepped into the place, hitherto vacant, in the middle of her universe, and she tried to persuade herself that she was content to adore him from afar.

Girls like Nathalie are not unusual. Under a jovial, happy-go-lucky exterior, they conceal an almost limitless power of loving, a limitless

craving to be loved. Too often, that side of their natures rests hidden. Cousin Eudora Evelina always insisted that Nathalie was not affectionate. Such an idea did not cross Harry's mind, however, as he stood looking into the eyes which were scarcely lower than his own.

"All right," he said, after a pause. "Then it is settled. We each need a chum, sister mine, so we seem to be provided for. If you have been half as lonely as I, since we came here, I am sorry for you; but I was sure you would think me too old a fellow to be good company. Now we'll take a fresh start and begin again."

"And I really won't be in the way?" she questioned steadily.

Harry's smile was very tender, and his hand on her shoulder shook a little, as he said,—

"Nathalie, I have lots of friends, good ones, too; but, since that day in Heidelberg when the news came to me, this is the first time I have felt as if I had anybody who really counted for much. Of course, I had you; but you were only eight years old, when I entered college, and I didn't really know you at all. I was older than you, when—when they died,

and I know better than you what we lost. We both of us have been lonely, dear; but perhaps, if we try very hard, we can count for enough to each other so the rest of it won't much matter. Shall we try, sister mine?"

Long afterwards, they both looked back to that evening as to the beginning of a new existence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NATHALIE was possessed, the next morning, with a feeling that she trod on air.

It had been late, the night before, when she and Harry had ended their talk by the fire; and she had gone to bed with the full intention of lying awake, half the night, to gloat over her new-found happiness. Instead of that, the deep sleep of healthy girlhood overcame her, and, ten minutes after her head touched the pillow, she was quite oblivious of either her brother or her past loneliness.

She waked early to find the daylight just creeping into her room. For a minute or two, she lay still, trying to think why it was that she felt so at peace with the world. Then, as she remembered the talk of the night before, she felt her spirits rise buoyantly. She wished she could see Harry, to assure herself that his mood was unchanged. Dear, steady old Harry! How those blue eyes of his had looked into her own! She felt as if

all the good things of the world lay in her hands, as she thought of him ; and she sat up in bed, eager to go to him and continue their interchange of confidences.

“Oh, Nathalie, don't! You pull all the clothes off.”

Peggy's fretful voice roused her, and she turned to find her sister staring at her in sleepy disapproval.

“What's the matter, Peggy?”

“It's cold, and you drag all the clothes off me. What are you sitting up for? Do lie down,” she whined.

“I am going to get up.”

“What for?”

“I want to see Harry.”

“What for?”

“To—why, to talk to him, of course.”

“It's too early. Do lie down. I want to go to sleep again.”

“Go, if you want to. I am going to get up.”

“No; you aren't. You'll go splashing and bumping all over the room, and then there can't anybody sleep,” Peggy argued, while she drew the blankets around her shoulders and closed her eyes. “I should think you would feel you were too old to be so selfish.”

“But it's time to get up.”

“It's hours and hours to breakfast time. Let me alone. I won't have you take my pillow away, Nathalie. Do stop!”

Nathalie looked at the clock. It was nearly an hour before Cousin Eudora would ring the rising-bell, more than an hour before Harry would be visible. He was always so scrubbed and starchy at breakfast, she reflected with pride. Would he give her a good-morning kiss? Since her parents died, she had never been used to such observances; but she had read of them in books, and they sounded very attractive to her. She wondered vaguely what Peggy would do, if she attempted to inaugurate the custom by kissing her. Rising on her elbow, she tried the experiment.

“Nathalie Arterburn, if you don't let me alone, I'll tell Harry. It's a mean shame to wake me up at four o'clock in the morning. Let me alone, now!”

And Nathalie meekly turned over on her other side and waited for the time to pass.

“Nathalie! Nathalie! Aren't you ever going to get up?” Peggy demanded, more than an hour later. “It is only five minutes before breakfast, and I want you to comb my hair

and button my dress. It does seem as if you might be ready to wake up and help me, once in a while. Do hurry, for Harry scolds, if I'm the least bit late."

Ten minutes later, Nathalie entered the breakfast-room. She was flushed from the haste of her toilet and from the shock of much cold water; yet, in some mysterious fashion all her own, she had contrived to put herself in order, down to the last pin. Harry looked up with a smile.

"Hullo, chum!" he remarked, while he caught her and drew her down for a kiss. "You look as if something had gone very right with you, this morning."

"It hasn't with me, then," Peggy observed, from her place at the other side of the table. "Nathalie waked me up before light. She was thrashing round and pulling the blankets off me; and when I asked her what was the matter, she just smirked at me and said she was going to find Harry. Stupid thing! I never can get any sleep in the morning."

But her plaint fell upon unheeding ears. Harry and Nathalie were laughing hilariously at a joke which passed her comprehension.

Meanwhile, some fifty blocks away, the

Barretts were also at breakfast, although Kingsley had not yet put in an appearance.

“What are we going to do with that fellow, Phebe?” Mr. Barrett asked despairingly.

“If you mean about being on hand at breakfast, that is a matter which will right itself in time. He grows later and later, every day; and it won't be long before he just gets around in time for to-morrow morning's breakfast. Let Rex work, and he will come out even, in the long run,” Mrs. Barrett returned, while she poured the coffee.

“But really he ought to get up.”

“He ought to do a good many things that he doesn't.”

“True, Babe; but how are we going to make him?”

“I don't know,” she confessed, after a pause. “I suppose I am really more to blame than he is; but it was so easy to spoil him, when we were waiting to see whether he lived or died. Now the mischief is done, Giff; and I'm not sure I know how to undo it.”

“But he will be intolerable, if he keeps on,” her husband objected. “I don't mean the getting up in the morning. I had the same failing, myself, and I came out of it, unim-

paired. But Rex is getting to feel that he is lord of all creation, and it isn't good for him."

"I wish he had somebody to take it out of him," his mother sighed.

"Why don't you?"

"Because the sinner has learned how to get around me and make me give in to him. I never had any trouble with Paul or Lyn; they toed the mark. So did Rex, till he was on his back."

"At least, you thought he did."

Mrs. Barrett ignored her husband's suggestion.

"But now he has found out all my weak points. He either makes me laugh in the midst of a lecture, or else shams all manner of terrifying symptoms that haven't the remotest connection with the frailties of his anatomy. He is bright enough to know that I have worried about him until I regard a toothache as a manifestation of spinal meningitis, and a cut finger as proof positive of weak heart action. Why don't you take him in hand, Giff?"

Mr. Barrett laid down his knife and fork, and clasped his hands.

"Deliver us!" he said fervently. "I can write sonorous opuses; but I cannot bring up

boys. They are yours, Babe. All I can do is to lend you the dignity of my chest tones, now and then, to eke out your futile falsetto. But truly, as you say, Rex needs some one to take it out of him."

"*It* being all sorts of crankiness," his mother interpolated. "He needs boys."

"He can't have them yet, Babe. It is of no use to think of putting him into a school; he would be on the football team within six hours. Morally, he may need boys; physically, they would be the death of him."

"Follow Ted's example, and prescribe a girl."

Mr. Barrett laughed.

"I should pity the girl; that's all. Rex has never manifested even a germ of chivalry."

"No matter. Fighting is wholesome," Mrs. Barrett replied tranquilly. "We might advertise for a girl to come and snub him, two or three times a week, a sort of moral *masseuse*."

"How is Mr. Arterburn getting on?" Mr. Barrett asked.

His wife shook her head.

"Badly, I am afraid. He works hard; but Rex is a trial to him. He has a fine face and manner, and he certainly knows how to go to

work. Mrs. Lyman says he is called by far the best of the new men at the university."

"Rex likes him."

Mrs. Barrett's keen eyes clouded.

"Yes; but Rex would try the patience of his dearest friend. I have been watching Mr. Arterburn, for the last ten days; and I can see that he is losing his pluck. It is a fact, Giff. The fellow looks ten years older at noon than he does in the morning; and, each day, he comes up the steps with a little less alertness."

"What does Rex do to him?" Mr. Barrett demanded.

"He doesn't. I can't put my finger on anything; it is all negative. Yesterday, I went in to speak to Mr. Arterburn, and I took pains to leave the door open, when I came out. Then I deliberately took my sewing and sat down where I could hear them. Giff, if I had been Mr. Arterburn, I'd have flayed Rex. He wasn't rude; he wasn't even discourteous; but he was maddening. Mr. Arterburn is a gentleman as well as a scholar. He had patience and tact enough for a dozen men; but, when he started to go home, I wanted to take him in my arms and cuddle him. He is noth-

ing but a boy; and he is at his wits' end how to get any work out of that son of ours. He must be a dear fellow to know. Who is he, anyway?"

"Myers told me about him; he's a namesake, Henry Myers Arterburn. The father was a banker in Massachusetts, lived beyond his income, died a week after his wife and left this son and four little children. This one has been abroad ever since. Now he has come home, and is trying to make a home for the children. It is a crazy thing to do."

"I don't think so. Anything is better than to have a family growing up apart from each other. I like his pluck. Is Mr. Myers helping him?"

"Yes, and no."

"Knowing Mrs. Myers and her hobbies, I suspect it is more no than yes," Mrs. Barrett said viciously. "Four little children! He must be rather alone here, Giff. Of course, he can't afford to go into things, with such a load on his hands. Let's ask him to dinner, next week. Feed a man, and straightway he confides in you. Perhaps we can find out what he needs, and help him along a little."

Mr. Barrett nodded at her approvingly.

“You’re a good sort of body, Babe. Why not have Betty and Percival to meet him? I am sorry Rex is so undesirable. He has no business to torment the fellow. I believe I’ll go up to Arterburn’s house, this afternoon, and have a plain talk with him. It may give him a little extra backbone, if he is sure of our support. And if you will have it out with Rex, and tell him——”

“Hullo, Mater!” Kingsley interrupted cheerfully. “What’s that you are going to tell me? That I am late again? Sorry. You see I went to sleep and forgot to wake up. Are there any more hot muffins? These are stone cold, and my digestion is too weak to do battle with cold muffins. No; one lump will do. I’m extra sweet, this morning, and don’t need much sugar.”

Late that afternoon, Nathalie was curled up before the fire, devouring *Sense and Sensibility*, while the heap of peanut shells on the table beside her proved beyond doubt that her appetite was not wholly for intellectual manna. She was too much absorbed in her book to heed the whirr of the bell; Eudora Evelina was taking a nap, and it was Peggy who went to the door.

"Is Mr. Arterburn at home?" the guest inquired.

"Yes, I guess so." Peggy's tone was conversational.

"Will you please give him this?"

Peggy took the card and halted on the parlor threshold, while she spelled out the unfamiliar name.

"Nathalie! Nathalie!" she shouted, as she led the way into the room. "Here's Mr. Gifford Barrett. He wants to see Harry. Where shall I put him?"

Aghast at the apparition of the tall, impressive stranger, Nathalie sprang up with an abruptness which scattered her lapful of peanuts the length of the hearth-rug, and sent Jane Austen to lie down inside the fender. Then she rallied, and advanced to greet the guest with a fair share of girlish ease.

"Oh, Mr. Barrett, come in," she said, while she put up a devout petition that he might be sufficiently near-sighted not to discover the fragments of her plebeian feast. "Peggy, please tell Harry that Mr. Barrett is here and would like to see him."

But Peggy demurred. She had no inten-

tion of being banished from the presence of this interesting guest.

"I don't know where he is," she responded.

"In his room. Please go at once, Peggy."

"You can go, yourself. I'm not going."

Nathalie looked ominously at her young sister; but Peggy, secure from open rebuke in the presence of a stranger, stared back at her with cynical indifference, and Nathalie was forced to yield to the situation and go herself to summon her brother.

"Yes, that's my sister Nathalie," she heard Peggy answer to some inaudible question. "She thinks she's going to make me mind her; but that's where she gets left."

And Nathalie passed on out of hearing, not quite sure whether she was more appalled at Peggy's frank statement, or at the words in which it was phrased.

Nathalie and Harry came back together.

"This is my sister Nathalie, Mr. Barrett," Harry introduced her with some pride.

Mr. Barrett looked at her steadily for an instant, as he took her hand. She flushed under his keen gaze. Then he laughed.

"I know you now," he said. "I was sure, when I came in, that I had seen you before."

Aren't you the young woman who gave a negro her seat in a Broadway car, one afternoon last month?"

She flushed more hotly than ever.

"Oh, dear! Were you there?"

"I was."

"Were you one of the men I snubbed?" she asked, with a desperate frankness which proved too much for the gravity of Mr. Barrett.

"No; I was at the other end of the car," he answered, when he could regain command of his voice.

"I am thankful for so much. Wasn't it awful?"

"Well, no; I thought it was rather good fun," he responded, with a boyish heartiness which astounded Harry. Already Nathalie was far less in awe of the great composer than he had ever been. At a loss as he was for the clue to the talk, he could yet see the swift establishment of good-fellowship between his sister and his employer; and he felt that Nathalie had discovered the true Gifford Barrett as he, in his proud reserve, had never succeeded in doing.

"What was there awful about it?" Mr.

Barrett went on laughingly. "I thought you were plucky to do it."

"I wasn't plucky; I was mad, not angry, but real downright Saxon mad," she returned. "They seemed so contemptible, huddled behind their newspapers, that I thought I would give them a lesson in politeness. Afterwards, I was a good deal scared at what I had done, and it seemed to me they would never stop offering me seats. Next time, I'll let a woman drop, before I get up. I had no idea I was going to make such a scene."

Gifford Barrett looked after her in amused admiration, as she went away, followed by the reluctant Peggy; but he only said,—

"I thought your brothers and sisters were all little children, Mr. Arterburn."

"Nathalie is the oldest. She is just sixteen."

"Only sixteen? She seems older than Rex." He laughed suddenly, as if at some passing thought. "She is as independent as Rex," he added. "They would make a tempestuous pair. I came up, to-day, to have a little talk about that boy of mine, Mr. Arterburn. I am afraid you are not finding him an easy pupil."

Harry's color came.

"Does that mean you are not pleased with my work, Mr. Barrett?" he asked directly.

"I am perfectly satisfied with your work; but I'm not at all satisfied with Kingsley. I am a good deal disgusted with the fellow, for I am sure he is shirking and making things hard for you. I wish you would tell me exactly what you think of the boy and of the best way to make a man of him."

It was more than an hour afterwards, when Mr. Barrett rose to go home.

"I think we understand each other, Mr. Arterburn," he said, as he paused on the threshold. "My wife and I have spoiled Rex completely, and now we are counting on you to help us undo the harm we have done. Rex is a good fellow and a gentleman; but he has grown selfish and inconsiderate, as well as lazy. I'll have a talk with him; meanwhile, I want you to be sure that Mrs. Barrett and I have perfect confidence in any plan of work you may think best to adopt. By the way, Mrs. Barrett wants to know if you can dine with us, next Friday, and meet Mr. and Mrs. Percival Ainslee. Mrs. Ainslee is Mrs. Barrett's niece, and one of last June's brides."

CHAPTER EIGHT

AFTER his four years of student life in Germany, after three months of living in a furnished apartment and eating the culinary vagaries which Eudora Evelina achieved from the combination of rural menus and urban markets, the idea that Harry was to dine with the Barretts threw the entire Arterburn household into great excitement.

"I'm so glad you aren't homely," Nathalie sighed contentedly, as she brushed the collar of his evening coat.

"Well, he isn't any too handsome," Peggy observed, from her post by the mirror whence she was watching the process of hair-brushing with absorbing interest, for the younger Arterburns had assembled in Harry's room to look on at the latter stages of his toilet.

"Oh, but I'm a good-looking man, Peggy," he returned laughingly. "You don't appreciate me; that's all."

"No; your nose is too puggy, and your

hair is too light. I like dark men better," she answered uncompromisingly. Then she relented. "If it were not for that and your glasses, you wouldn't be so bad."

"Peggy, you beast, shut up!" Ralph ordered her. "If you ever look one tenth as well as Harry, you can thank your lucky stars. What's the sense of using two brushes, Hal? One will go for me."

"Oh, what do you suppose he will get to eat?" Peggy said hungrily. "He will have three courses, and maybe four. Do you think they'll give him ice cream?"

"No; he'll have all sorts of filling things, and queer, messy sauces on everything. Don't eat too much, Harry, or you won't be able to tutor Rex, to-morrow."

"Will he be there?" Ralph asked.

"Of course. They wouldn't send him to bed without his supper. That's a beautiful bow, Harry; but don't scrape down your hair so flat. It's too dear, when it curls up at the ends."

"Oh, Nathalie, Fizzums has taken the razor!" Peggy shrieked.

"Well, take it away from him then. Fizzums, put down the knife at once."

“But I wants it. I wants to cut wiv it; it's so nice an' shiny. Oh, I've cutted ve table all up, it's so sharp, an' I've cutted me!”

Fizzums raised his voice to a wail, and Nathalie turned to see the razor drop to the floor and a hacked little thumb going into a dejected little mouth. By the time plaster and consolation had been applied to the injury, Harry came in search of his sister.

“Oh, you are such a nice gentleman!” she exclaimed, as she turned him about for inspection. “Really, I am almost proud of you. I never supposed you would look so well in evening clothes; but you aren't waiter-y a bit.”

“Thanks for the compliment. Have you any suggestions to make?”

“Yes, there is a scrap of lint on your right elbow, and I want to fuzzle up your hair a little. You would have such pretty hair, Harry, if you would only let it grow. And wait a minute.” She came running back from her own room with a heavy white rose in her hand. “I bought this with my own funds,” she said, as she fastened it into his buttonhole. “I don't know whether men

wear things now, or not; but, if nobody else has a rose, you cling to yours, and they will think it is a later fashion you've just brought home from abroad. Now go on, and be sure you don't use a spoon, if you can possibly make things stick to a fork."

"I wish you were going, too, chum."

She made him a sweeping courtesy.

"'Nobody asked me, sir, she said.' I'm not out yet. The worst of it is, I'm not in, either. Still, it is a comfort to have you want me."

An old shoe of Peggy's crashed against the panels, as he closed the door behind him. Then the Arterburn family settled down to their own belated meal.

In the Barretts' luxurious dining-room, a merry little party gathered, that night. From the first, Harry had liked frank, outspoken Mrs. Barrett; and, at his own table, Mr. Barrett was neither the great composer nor the awe-inspiring employer, but a genial, jovial gentleman who, for some unfathomable reason, addressed his wife as Babe and teased her and his son alternately. Mr. Ainslee was a homely, attractive man of the early twenties, still too much absorbed in his bride to count

for much in the general talk; and Mrs. Ainslee was as simple as Mrs. Barrett, to the manifest relief of Harry who had felt some awe at sight of her elaborate gown and the diamonds in her tawny hair. He had met few society women in his life; and from books he had gathered the idea that haughtiness and frivolity were the inseparable adjuncts of imported frocks. Braced to meet a possible snubbing, he was astonished to hear Mrs. Ainslee ask, as she seated herself next him at the table,—

“Do you know how to run an elevator, Mr. Arterburn? I do,” she added. “I have always longed to make one of the things go, and I confided my aspirations to Aunt Babe. Yesterday, coming down in the Inexpressible Building, she put on what I call her empress-dowager expression, and said to the boy, ‘My niece is very fond of running elevators. Will you kindly allow her to take this down?’”

“Did he?”

“Of course he did. Nobody ever dares refuse Aunt Babe, when she clothes herself in her dignity. I succeeded beautifully, only I couldn't stop at the main floor. I pretended

that I had urgent business in the basement, and we ignominiously trudged back by the stairway."

Her brown eyes glistened, as she told of her prank, and Harry wished that Nathalie had been there. This simple, off-hand family circle would have been just to her liking. Anyway, he could have the satisfaction of telling her about it, when he reached home. During the past week, the brother and sister had fallen into the habit of a long good-night talk over the fading fire. It was hard to say which of them enjoyed it the more. Each brought to it the full record of the day's achievements and worries; and Harry was fast finding out that even a girl of sixteen was no despicable confidante, that Nathalie could listen well, sympathize generously and even at times let fall a bit of shrewd advice which was worth a second thought.

"Betty, I do wish you would try not to bring disgrace upon the family. Every morning, when I take up *The Sun*, I expect to see your name heading a column of sensation. New York isn't Quantuck, and you must have some regard for the local laws of decorum."

She shot a merry glance across the table at

the tall, grave-eyed man who had been introduced as Dr. Holden.

“I won't say I am your cousin, Mac. I'll shield myself under Uncle Giff's reputation. That is broad enough to cover us all. How comes on Opus Seventy-nine, Uncle Giff?”

“Badly. I wanted to work, to-night; but your Aunt Babe insisted upon having you youngsters here.”

Mrs. Ainslee turned to her cousin.

“Rex, is your father's temper steady, nowadays?”

“Awful,” Kingsley replied concisely.

Mrs. Ainslee nodded gravely.

“That means smouldering genius. Even mamma gets a touch of nerves, when she comes to the critical chapter of her plot. Percival, I am glad you aren't a genius. It would make it very painful to have to live with you.”

“How soon is Aunt Ted coming down?” Dr. Holden asked.

“She is coming back with us, after the holidays,” Mrs. Ainslee answered, while Mr. Barrett explained,—

“Aunt Ted is Mrs. Farrington, Arterburn.”

Harry raised his brows.

"The Mrs. Farrington?" he inquired.

Mrs. Barrett laughed.

"I'll tell Ted that," she said. "It will make up to her for the people who have never heard of her. Yes, she is Theodora Farrington, and she grinds out books with the same zeal that Mr. Barrett grinds out sonatas and symphonies. In fact, I think they rather set each other on to new attempts, and then race to see which can get through first. They both had an attack at Quantuck, one summer. Our houses are next to each other, and, every noon, we used to hear Teddy calling, 'Giff! Giff! I've done three thousand words. How much have you done?' They reckoned up that three bars of piano score equaled one hundred words, and they used to balance their accounts, every night."

"While you and papa played cribbage, and Mac and I cooked fudge," Mrs. Ainslee added. "I hope you know Quantuck, Mr. Arterburn. The whole McAlister clan foregathers there, every summer."

"Who are the McAlisters?" he inquired.

There was a general shout.

"We all are," Mrs. Barrett explained. "My father is Dr. McAlister; Dr. Holden is Mc-

L. of C.

Alister Holden, and so it goes. We don't worship our family tree, though, only the fruit that hangs on it."

"You just ought to see my grandfather!" Kingsley burst out eagerly. "He is the best of them all. He mended my ribs, and he thumped me when I was a kid and tore his books, and he let me tumble round in his office, all day long. He is eighty now; but he's better company than any other fellow I ever knew."

Harry glanced up in surprise. Was this enthusiastic Kingsley the listless, idle, indifferent boy he knew? At least, this proved that he was capable, not only of loyalty, but of waking up into energetic, boylike interest. The possibility was there, and Harry Arterburn registered a swift vow to succeed in making the enthusiasm permanent, in winning some measure of the loyalty for himself.

Later in the evening, Mrs. Barrett swept down upon him, while he was in the midst of a cozy talk with Mrs. Ainslee.

"Betty," she commanded; "do go and give Mac a lecture. Dr. Sauvage says the dear fellow is working himself to death and fading away before our eyes. He doesn't look it;

but appearances are so deceitful. I wish you would go to remonstrate with him; you always could bring him to terms. Besides, I want Mr. Arterburn to myself. I have things to say."

Mrs. Ainslee laughed, as she obediently went in search of her cousin. Mrs. Barrett dropped down into the chair which her niece had left vacant.

"Mr. Arterburn, I want to borrow one of your possessions. Are you prepared to be generous?"

"Down to my last crust."

"One doesn't borrow crusts; one begs those. This is a sure case of borrowing, to be returned later. Mr. Barrett says you have a pretty sister."

"I have a pair of sisters. I'm not so sure of the beauty of them, though."

"I remember now; he did say there was a little one. I mean the older, Miss Nathalie. That is her name, isn't it? She is the one I want."

"To borrow?"

"Yes, or to steal, if you won't lend her. Mr. Barrett is going to conduct a little thing of his at a symphony concert, a week from to-

morrow, and of course we have a box. He is counting on you to take care of me; and I'd like to borrow your sister to amuse Rex. Boys do get so bored at concerts, unless they have somebody young to talk to, between scenes. I know she isn't old enough to go out much; but it will be all right for her to be in Mr. Barrett's box. May she come?"

Harry hesitated for a minute, before he replied,—

"She would love to go, Mrs. Barrett, and I should be delighted to have her. I ought to tell you, though, that she is nothing but a child, a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl."

"All the better." Mrs. Barrett spoke with decision. "I like girl-y girls, and I have an idea I shall like your sister. May I count on you both?"

"You may. I wish I knew how to thank you, Mrs. Barrett." Harry looked up, letting his steady blue eyes meet her keen brown ones. "It will be a great treat to us both. I love music, myself, and I haven't heard any since I left Germany. What is worse, I can't send Nathalie to such things, because—I can't afford it. You were good to think of us."

Mrs. Barrett had been watching him fixedly.

She had seen the slight hesitation and the straightening of his lips which had punctuated the frank avowal of his lack of means, and her shrewd eyes softened.

“It will be a real kindness, if you will help fill the box,” she said. “Dr. Holden and the Ainslees will be there, too. I always make a point of taking Rex on such state occasions; but he gets sleepy and looks so disgusted that I am in terror lest the critics comment on the fact, next morning. If your sister goes, they can amuse each other.”

There was a short silence between them, while Mr. Barrett, urged by Mrs. Ainslee, seated himself at the piano and played a few bars of his new symphony. For the time being, Mrs. Barrett forgot her duties as hostess, as she leaned back, watching the well-set brown head with a pride which in some women would have been altogether comic. Then, as he rose, she turned back to Harry with a new light in her eyes.

“Mr. Arterburn, I wish you knew how we appreciate all you are making of Rex. I have been doing my best to spoil the boy, and I know you are having a hard time with him. But—well, I am his mother, and Rex talks over

most things with me. I thank you from the lowest valve of my heart for the patience you have with his crankiness and whims. You are helping him, even if you can't see it yet; and I only hope you will stand by him until you have helped us make a man-child of him once more. He is my baby, you know, and he was so desperately ill; but now ——"

"Babe," Mr. Barrett called, from across the room; "when you get through with Arterburn, I'd like to show him my German photographs. They may help make him homesick."

Half an hour later, Dr. Holden was standing at his aunt's elbow, when Harry bade her good-night, and he noted the look of gentleness which was softening her handsome face.

"Saturday night, then, Mr. Arterburn," she said cordially. "And I wish you would get a trick of dropping in upon us often. It is good for Rex to have you coming and going, and I'd like another boy to spoil. No; never mind if you are busy. You can cut something else, if need be, to make time for us."

Dr. Holden and Harry Arterburn went away together. Half a block from the Barretts' door, the doctor broke the silence.

"Aunt Babe is a brick," he said meditatively.

CHAPTER NINE

“**B**UT what on earth shall I wear?”
Nathalie said ruefully, that night.

She said it again, the next morning, while she was helping Cousin Eudora Evelina to clear the table.

“What do you want to wear?” Eudora Evelina asked.

“Something pretty, so that Mrs. Barrett needn't be ashamed of me.”

“Pretty is as pretty does,” Eudora Evelina remarked sententiously.

“Maybe, up on a Vermont farm; but I've an idea that not even my best manners could make a frumpy gown pass muster at a New York concert.”

Eudora Evelina glared at her.

“Vermont is as good as New York, I guess. *Frump* ain't a word we hear much up there, anyhow. I had to come to New York to learn it.”

Nathalie digested the rebuke in silence. Then she reiterated,—

"But what shall I wear?"

"Your church dress."

"My—what?"

"Your best dress, the blue one, I suppose; whatever you would wear to church."

"But I don't wear my best clothes to church; it's vulgar," Nathalie remonstrated.

"I'd like to know why."

"Why! It looks as if you didn't have anywhere else to wear them."

"Well, I hain't," Eudora Evelina responded flatly.

Eudora Evelina belonged to the tribe of women whose collars and coiffures increase in elaborateness as the day goes on, yet only attain their maximum development when an outing is in prospect. Nathalie, who had been trained to other manners, looked with disfavor upon Eudora Evelina's loose dressing sacks and the grove of curl-papers that rustled about her peaked, parchment-colored brows; and upon divers occasions, she had implored Harry to demand a more æsthetic appearance from the priestess of the breakfast-table.

However, there was one thing for which to rejoice. When the work was done, Eudora Evelina invariably took herself away to her

own room, where she sat sewing and rocking with a vigor that jerked both feet from the floor at every stitch so regularly as to suggest a concealed wire connecting her hands and feet, and allowing but one to be extended at a time. Daily and after every meal, by means of a rocking-chair, Eudora Evelina churned herself into a species of Nirvana whence she emerged, refreshed, to prepare the next meal and wash up the dishes.

"If I was you, I'd wear my blue dress," she advised, after a pause. "It looks good and warm and sensible, and blue always becomes you."

"But it is so dark," Nathalie protested.

"Land alive! You don't want a white dress, at this time of year; do you? What's got into you, Nathalie? To hear you fret, I should think you wasn't any older than that Peggy."

Nathalie set down a pitcher with a bang, and fled to her own room. She was suddenly discovering that an unexpected invitation is not always an unmixed boon, and she felt a childish desire to cry. Instead, she rummaged her closet and brought out the least impossible items of her wardrobe. She had spread them

on the bed, and she sat staring dolefully at the meagre array, when the door opened and "that Peggy," as Eudora Evelina invariably called her, came bouncing into the room.

"Well, what now?" she demanded. "Are you going to Europe?"

"No; I am going to that concert, and I haven't a rag that is fit to wear."

It was Saturday morning, no school, and Peggy had just been told that she could go to a children's matinée with the family of a friend. In consequence, she was in high good humor, as she looked at the little heap on the bed.

"Ask Harry to get you something, then."

"I'd wear my nightgown first. Harry Arterburn has all he can do to feed us, without buying me any new gowns."

Child though she was, Peggy flashed upon her sister a quick look of admiration.

"Why can't you wear your pink lawn?" she asked practically. "It is all covered with those fuzzy little ruffles, and you can have my great big white sash to wear with it; that is, if you won't drop things on it," she added, in a momentary recoil from her unwonted generosity.

“Peggy, you are a genius, dear. I never thought of that gown.” Nathalie caught her young sister impulsively and stooped to kiss her; but Peggy wriggled out of her clutches.

“If you do that sort of thing, Nathalie Arterburn, I won’t let you have the sash,” she threatened. “Maybe I won’t, anyway. I don’t know as you really need it, and it would be too bad to smash it all up for nothing.”

However, when the evening came, Peggy stood true to her offer and of her own accord produced the sash, her single bit of finery, in honor of the occasion. Then she settled herself, Turk fashion, in the middle of the bed, and sat looking on while Nathalie brushed out and braided her mop of wavy golden hair.

“No, not that,” she said critically, as her sister took up a pink ribbon. “Tie your hair with black velvet, same as you always do. Colored things in the hair are horrid.”

“How do you know?” Nathalie asked. “You don’t go to places of this kind.”

“I don’t need to. I know some things of myself, and that is one of them,” Peggy said, with lofty decision. “When I’m old enough, I am going to be a milliner, or else a wonderful beauty. Either way, I can have all the

ribbons I want, and I'll know how to wear them, too. Now let me tie the sash. You'll be sure to muss it; you're so careless."

Nathalie submitted as meekly as if their ages had been reversed. Then Peggy drew back and surveyed the result.

"You really do look sweet," she said grudgingly; "but there is one more thing you must have. Wait a minute; but don't you dare sit down on my sash."

She vanished in the direction of the kitchen, where Eudora Evelina was still clattering the dinner dishes.

"Cousin Eudora, I want your gold beads," she demanded abruptly.

"Well, you won't get them. They're willed to your Cousin Dora," Eudora Evelina returned tranquilly.

"I don't mean after you are dead. That wouldn't do me any good. I want them now, to-night."

"My soul! Don't break that platter. What for?"

"For Nathalie to wear. She is all ready to go, and she needs your beads to finish her up."

"But I never take them off."

"Well, I suppose you can, if you try. They

don't grow to you; do they? Please let me borrow them, just this once. Harry won't like it, if Nathalie doesn't look right, and you can come to see for yourself that she does need them. Come!" She pulled imperiously at one of the soapy hands.

Eudora Evelina yielded, a grim, unwilling victim to Peggy's impetuosity. On Nathalie's threshold, she halted and stared at her from top to toe.

"If you catch your death of cold in that summer dress, you needn't expect I'm going to nurse you," she said tartly; but, even as she spoke, her fingers were busy with the string that tied her old-fashioned beads.

Kingsley was drumming on the piano, when the man ushered Harry Arterburn and his sister into the room, that night. He possessed rather more than his lawful share of snobbishness, and he had manifested no interest at all, when his mother had announced that the Arterburns were to be of their party. His tutor was well enough, as tutors went; but his tutor's sister was probably a shy, poky girl with elbows enough for a dozen. He looked up indifferently, as they came in.

The next minute, he was on his feet and

close at his mother's side. In crossing the room, Nathalie's cloak had slipped from her shoulders, and she stood revealed, a tall, slender girl who walked as freely as if she had spent her life on the golf links, who was dressed as daintily as any girl in his own exclusive dancing class. He could not be expected to know that her gown came from a midsummer bargain counter in Boston; it was enough for him that it was pink and fluffy and becoming, and that the black bow which tied her yellow hair had a saucy cock to it that was in harmony with her dimples and with the spirited poise of her head.

"Yes, I'm here, too, Mater," he interrupted impatiently. "You might as well introduce me, while your hand is in."

Even during the moment of introduction, Nathalie looked him over critically. Instinctively she realized that his purple was royal, his linen very fine. Kingsley Barrett was plainly a gentleman's son, albeit his tall, thin figure, his long nose and straight sandy hair were unbeautiful to look upon. He stooped slightly, his motions were languid and, at rest, his face was fretful; but his mouth showed her that he could discover the point of a joke,

and she liked the look in his gray eyes which seemed to her to go far towards redeeming him from actual ugliness.

"Yes, the pater has gone on ahead," he explained, as they entered the carriage. "He likes to get into the feel of the place beforehand, when he is going to conduct. Have you ever heard any of his things?"

"I've never heard any music to speak of," she answered evasively.

"What's the matter? Don't you like it?"

"I haven't ever had a chance to tell."

"You'll like the pater's. It is sweet; but it's got the go to it, lots of brasses and things."

Nathalie looked up uncomprehendingly. She wondered if he alluded to andirons.

"Brasses?" she repeated.

"Yes, horns and that sort of thing. It makes you feel queer and spooky, when you listen. How do you like New York?"

"I just love it."

He laughed at her enthusiasm.

"It's a jolly sort of place. Do you know many people here?"

"No; not anybody but the girls at my school, and I don't care for them."

"What's the school?"

“Madame Zavenski’s.”

“I know it; it’s a good place, has piles of pretty girls there, Westerners mostly. They are a frisky set.”

“Too frisky for me,” Nathalie said abruptly. Then she checked herself. “My brother speaks of you often,” she added primly.

Kingsley smiled at her change of tone.

“I’ve an idea he does. He is having a bad time of it with me. What does he say about it?”

For a minute, Nathalie struggled with her sense of decorum. Then her dimples came, and she looked up roguishly.

“That you are not overburdened with too much zeal for learning.”

Kingsley’s laugh rang out jovially.

“He has struck the root of the matter. But what is the use of my learning a lot of stupid trash, just for the sake of forgetting it again? Now honestly, Miss Nathalie, do you like to study?”

“Not at school,” she confessed. “I never had a tutor.”

“Lucky you! I wish I didn’t.”

“That’s not nice to Harry,” she retorted, a little too sharply for politeness.

“He is the best of the bunch that applied for the job.”

The last word was unfortunate, and Kingsley's tone was a bit toploftical. It nettled his companion.

“I suppose he was. Else you wouldn't have hired him,” she answered shortly.

Kingsley eyed her askance. His look expressed admiration rather than annoyance, although as a rule he was accustomed to be treated with more meekness by the girls to whom he deigned to talk. This intrepid young woman was a new species to him.

“Of course. Your brother is all right, Miss Nathalie; it's only that I'd rather be in school.”

“Why don't you go, then?” Her accent was still slightly hostile.

Kingsley's face reddened. Now that he had allowed himself to be cornered, he suddenly realized that he was reluctant to confess any weakness to the vigorous girl at his side. He took refuge in a half-truth which unhappily did little to recommend him in Nathalie's eyes.

“Too many fellows of all kinds in a school,” he said languidly. “I didn't care about running up against them.”

"Oh, the hateful little snob!" was Nathalie's mental comment. "He probably feels that same way about Harry and me." And she refused to be lured from her silence until she found herself seated between Mrs. Barrett and Mrs. Ainslee, with Kingsley out of sight somewhere in the back of the box.

"Yes, I was out with Mac again, to-day," Mrs. Ainslee was saying to her aunt. "Percival doesn't mind, and Mac does love to have me in his train. Oh, but some of the children are pitiful to see!"

"I am only afraid Mac will lose you; he is such an absent-minded fellow. Your mother would have a fit, Betty, if she thought you were prowling around the East Side."

"Not with Mac. She knows he will take care of me," Mrs. Ainslee answered, with a smile at her tall cousin who leaned on the back of her chair. "Besides, it is hereditary in the McAlister family. Both you and mamma have had aspirations towards slumming. It has remained for Mac and me to accomplish it."

Nathalie was eagerly waiting for Mrs. Ainslee to reach a full stop.

"Oh, do you go to the East Side?" she broke in.

"Now and then. What do you know about it?" Mrs. Ainslee asked.

"Nothing, only that it is there. I didn't know even that until lately. I supposed New York was all like Fifth Avenue, or else apartment houses like ours. Is it really as bad as they say?"

At the sound of the earnest young voice, Dr. Holden turned and bestowed upon Nathalie the first real attention he had vouchsafed her. Apparently he was pleased at what he saw.

"Worse, Miss Nathalie," he said gravely. "With the one great exception, the people who write about it, know it only from what they see in the streets. A doctor knows the best and the worst of it."

"But you don't do any doctoring there; do you?" she said blankly.

"Why not?"

"You—you don't look it," she returned naively, with a glance at his evening clothes.

"My cousin gives half his time to tenement work," Mrs. Ainslee explained proudly. "He has an up-town office; but he puts the very

best of himself into his care of the tenement children."

"And you go with him?"

Nathalie asked the question with some hesitancy. Up to this time, she had associated charity work with sharp noses and spectacles and brown shoes with crumply toes. It seemed to her incredible that Mrs. Ainslee and Dr. Holden could know or care for such things.

"I was with him, to-day. Sometimes I go alone."

"Aren't you afraid?"

"Not in places where they know him. The fact that I'm cousin to Dr. Holden is all the protection I need."

"Oh, I wish——" Nathalie began impetuously. Then she paused.

Mrs. Ainslee smiled. She was not so far removed from her own girlhood as to have lost her understanding of the girl at her side.

"That you could go with me?" she supplemented. "Well, why not, if your brother is willing? But now we must listen to the music."

It was Tschaikovsky's great symphony in *D minor* which opened the programme, that night; but it must be confessed that Nathalie



listened with more astonishment than admiration. Tune there was none, and some of the harmonies sounded horribly inharmonious to her untrained ears. She stole a furtive glance at her brother to see if he were as disgusted as she at the bedlam of sound which issued from the orderly ranks of the orchestra; but Harry's face was rapt. She looked from him to Dr. Holden who was also devoutly listening. Even Kingsley in the back of the box seemed to be of the same mood, so she wisely concluded that the fault must lie in herself, and tried to listen as devoutly as the others. For a time, her eyes were as busy as her ears, and, girl-like, she reveled in the gowns and the jewels before her. Then at last she forgot them all, and lost herself completely in the climax of the *Lamentoso*.

"What do you think of it?" Kingsley's voice demanded, in the hush that followed.

She gathered herself together with a jerk and too suddenly to give time for choosing her words.

"I never heard anything like it before," she answered breathlessly. "It makes my back feel as if it were all drawn up into creepy little ridges."

CHAPTER TEN

BOOK in hand, Fizzums advanced to meet Kingsley in a series of short tacks, like a yacht in a heavy sea.

“See, Mr. Wex Bawwett, vis is what Fizzums got, when he was—vaccinated.”

“What is it?” Kingsley asked, with the painstaking courtesy of one unused to small children and anxious to make a good impression.

“Vis? Vis is my Jesus-book. Vey gave it to me for being vaccinated.”

Kingsley took the Testament from the pudgy hands.

“It’s a fine one,” he said, with an effort at enthusiasm. “Did it hurt to be vaccinated, Fizzums?”

“No; only kind of swashy.”

“What! Where did they do it? On your arm?” Kingsley’s voice expressed his horror at the idea of such wholesale blood-letting.

Fizzums shook his head.

“On your leg, then?”

“No; up in ve middle of my head.”

“They must have a strange breed of doctors in Vermont,” Kingsley remarked, half to himself.

“Ve doctor doesn't do it,” Fizzums explained disdainfully. “It's ve minister in ve church. He holds you wiv one hand and swashes on ve water wiv ve uvver, an' says fings, an' it gets in your ears; but you mustn't cwiy, even if it is cold. Nobody cwies in church.”

“What do they do?”

“Go to sleep. Vat's what Cousin Vedowa does, only she won't say so. Once she snored up big, an' Walph an' Peggy laughed, an' she was mad. Mr. Wex Bawwett?”

“Well?”

“I want you to tell me twuly, no joking; what is a snob?”

“It's a—I don't know how to tell you, Fizzums. Why?”

“'Cause Nathalie says you're a nawful snob.”

Kingsley turned scarlet, and he half arose from his chair; but Fizzums babbled on discursively.

“Have you ever been in a cemingtewy, Mr. Wex Bawwett?”

“No; I can't say I have,” Kingsley responded guardedly, questioning meanwhile whether Nathalie had also alluded to him as a corpse.

“I have. I went wiv Cousin Vedowa. It was lovely in ve cemingtewy, Mr. Wex Bawwett. Vat's ve place where people's spiwits have gwown out into fwowers. Wouldn't you like to go vere an' gwow out into a fwower, Mr. Wex Bawwett?”

“Some day; not now.” Kingsley was beginning to wonder impatiently how long it would take Peggy to find her sister. It was his first introduction to the younger members of the Arterburn family, and he devoutly trusted that they were not all so friendly and loquacious as this tow-headed babe with the rapt smile.

“Why don't you want to go now?” Fizzums persisted, with the zeal of a professional revivalist. “Your body would back up to heaven, just ve way 'Lijah did, an' your spiwit would gwow out into a fwower. What sort of a fwower would you like best to be, Mr. Wex Bawwett?”

“A sunflower,” Kingsley answered desperately.

Fizzums drew near, rested his hands on the knees of the guest and stared up into the freckled face with an intent scrutiny which proved embarrassing.

“I fink you’re more like a tiger lily,” he announced, after a pause.

“Fiz-zums!” Nathalie exclaimed in consternation, as she appeared on the threshold just in time to catch his last words.

It was a week after the concert, and the two young people had not met in the meantime. Their first evening together had not resulted in the friendly relations for which Mrs. Barrett had hoped. Kingsley was ready to play the agreeable to Nathalie; but Nathalie, too proud to let herself run the risk of being snubbed, had borne herself haughtily, and, after the unlucky speech of Kingsley, she had met his advances with a chill dignity which both piqued and attracted him. For the past week, he had been scheming how he could meet her again; and he had readily fallen in with his mother’s suggestion that he take her down to an exhibition, that afternoon. He had dressed for the event with an unusual degree of care, and now it was somewhat annoying to have his hoped-for impression spoiled

by the critical speech of Fizzums. For a minute, his eyes met those of Nathalie, and his flush deepened. Then the embarrassing pause ended in a burst of laughter.

“Are you ready, Miss Nathalie?” he asked, as he rose to meet her.

“Ready for what?”

“For the exhibition. Didn’t Mr. Arterburn tell you?”

“Harry? No; he didn’t say anything about an exhibition. Did your mother send me a message?”

“No; I did. I want you to go down with me to see a set of Swede etchings. The mater isn’t going to use her cards. Mr. Arterburn should have told you.”

His tone expressed a haughty displeasure, and Nathalie immediately took offense.

“Please remember, even if you do scold about your tutor, you have no right to speak like that to me about my brother,” she said sharply.

For a moment, Kingsley stared at her in amazement. Then he burst out laughing.

“Oh, I say,” he remarked persuasively; “I wouldn’t be so touchy, if I were you. Your brother is all right, only I didn’t think he

would be the fellow to forget a message. But it's not too late now. Won't you come?"

"Thank you, I think I won't." Nathalie's accent was uncompromising.

"Why not? Don't you care for pictures?"

"Yes."

"Why not, then?"

"I'd rather not, to-day."

"That's no reason at all. Are you mad because I wasn't meek enough to suit you about your brother?" he demanded a little angrily, as, he suddenly recalled Fizzums's use of the word *snob*.

"That's one reason," she admitted.

"But I've apologized for that, and it doesn't count. What's another?"

"Mr. Wex Bawwett," Fizzums admonished him suddenly; "you mustn't get mad wiv Nathalie. If you do, Cousin Vedowa won't give you any cookie, all ve week. Vat's what she did to me, an' ven Nathalie an' me had to give each uvver a——"

"Thank you, I believe I will go, after all," Nathalie interrupted. "I'll be ready in a minute." And she left the room.

Early November had brought cold, stinging

weather and a flurry of snow ; but Nathalie scorned any suggestion of cars.

“If there’s time, let’s walk,” she urged. “I never get tired of these streets. It is like running a race with all the world.”

“It will be a long race, to-day,” he suggested.

“How long?”

“Four miles.”

“Oh, that won’t take very long,” she said blithely. “I am used to a great deal longer walks than that, and it is so early.”

“But we always take a car down town.”

“Time you learned to walk, then.”

In spite of his misgivings, Kingsley looked at her admiringly. Dauntless and eager, she was like the spirit of the windy day, and her bright hair and animated face were glowing against the dark background of her coat and hat. Beside her superb vitality, he felt himself a weakling, and nothing would have tempted him to admit that he quailed at the prospect of the four-mile tramp before him.

“When are you and Betty going slumming?” he inquired, as they swung around the corner into Broadway.

“Betty?”

"Yes, Mrs. Ainslee. She is my cousin, you know."

"You are the most mixed-up family! Are you all related to each other?"

"All the family?"

"I mean all of you who were in the box, that night."

"Yes, one way or another. Mac's mother was the oldest, then Betty's mother. She is Aunt Ted. Then came my mother. There are two brothers. One of them never married; the other did, but he hasn't any children."

"You have some brothers, too?"

"A pair of them in Yale. I'm the youngest of all the cousins, and Betty is the only girl. No wonder we spoil her."

"Are all girls supposed to be spoiled?" Nathalie inquired, laughing.

"Yes, of course. Aren't you?"

"No; I wish I were. It must be great fun; but girls have always been a drug in the market, where I have been. Besides, I am more than half boy."

"Don't you need a boy chum?" Kingsley asked audaciously.

"Thank you, I have one."

"Who? I beg your pardon; it is none of my business, though."

She laughed frankly.

"There's no secret about it; it is Harry. We do have such fine times together. I never had a real chum before; I was always the odd one."

"Me, too; but I haven't got over it." Kingsley's tone was a little envious.

"You?" Nathalie looked incredulous.

"Yes, I never really belonged anywhere. The boys pair off, and the pater and mater. I used to wish we could adopt an extra one, to match up with me."

Nathalie nodded gravely.

"I know how that is. I went through it always, until I had Harry. It's an awful feeling, too. You long and long to count for a great deal to somebody or other, and all the time you are sure that there isn't a soul who really needs you."

Kingsley's eyes rested upon her thoughtfully, while she was speaking.

"That's about the way it goes," he said. "I suppose with me it has come because I have been out of things so long that all the sets are full, and there's no especial room for me."

Everybody, girls and all, is so blasted athletic, nowadays, that I'm left by myself a good deal." He paused, surprised at his own free speech.

Nathalie looked up at him with a wave of impulsive liking. For the instant, she forgot that she was talking to the boy whom she had so lately dubbed a snob.

"There is always room for you at our house," she said kindly; "that is, if you care to come."

"I'd like to, if I won't be in the way. I've been trying to get your brother to ask me; but he wouldn't take a hint, no matter how I put it."

"He probably thought you wouldn't care to come to such a little bit of a place," she answered. "Now you have seen it and have had a specimen of Fizzums's conversation, the risk is yours. Come whenever you like."

"All right; it's a go, then," he responded heartily. "I hope I shan't wear out my welcome. Miss Nathalie! What in thunder?"

For Nathalie suddenly had left him and darted across the crowded street. Between the passing drays, he could see her standing face to face with a red-necked man.

“What are you doing to him?” she was demanding fiercely, as Kingsley came up to her side.

“Teaching him not to follow me, when I tell him to go back.” The man raised his cane again.

Nathalie grew white with anger, as she pointed to the cowering dog at her feet.

“If you touch him again, one single other time, I will call a policeman,” she said slowly.

The man surveyed her from head to heel, looked into the white face and the blazing eyes. There was no doubt of her being in earnest. He swung around and whistled to the cringing, shivering little beast to follow him.

“Might I inquire——” Kingsley was beginning, when Nathalie interrupted him.

“He was beating the dog, just pounding him, and I couldn't stand it.”

“So I inferred.”

“You needn't laugh at me. I stopped him.”

“For the time being,” Kingsley replied cynically.

“What do you mean by that?”

“That he will thrash the dog worse than ever, as soon as he gets round the corner.”

Nathalie glared at him as if he had been the chief offender.

“Do you honestly think so?”

“Of course. Hold on! What are you going to do, Miss Nathalie?” For Nathalie was starting off in hot pursuit of the man.

“I am going to make him give me that dog.”

“You’ll get yourself into a scrape.”

“Don’t care if I do.”

“And you’ll get an extra dog on your hands.”

“What of it? I’m not going to stand by to see him abused.”

Deliberation over a crisis was never Nathalie’s plan of action. She did her deeds in haste and repented of their consequences at leisure. Ten minutes later, she had resumed her walk down town. Curled into the hollow of her arm was a small, bleary dog in whose veins coursed a strange mingling of many bloods. Kingsley eyed him askance.

“What are you going to do with him?” he asked.

“Keep him until I can find a good home for him.”

“But now, till we get home from the exhibition?”

“Take him with us, and bribe the umbrella man to check him.”

“Miss Nathalie!” Kingsley remonstrated. “Do you mean to say that you are going to perambulate the length and breadth of Fifth Avenue, lugging that raw-boned little cur?”

Nathalie cast a mischievous glance at her immaculate companion; then she smiled protectingly down at the dog's indeterminate nose.

“Poor little thing!” she said sweetly. “See how good and quiet he is! He isn't a bit heavy; but, if I should get very tired, you wouldn't mind carrying him for me, part of the time; would you?”

As they came out from the exhibition, two hours later, Nathalie once more shouldered her canine burden and prepared to walk home. It had been well for her that her companion possessed a liberal allowance. It takes no meagre fee to induce Twenty-third Street officials to harbor stray dogs; but Kingsley had been generous, in his relief at the idea of freeing himself even temporarily from the creature. They came back to find the creature tangled in a network of string and howling piteously. Kingsley looked at him with

disfavor, while Nathalie bent down to free him. The three Barrett boys had owned a succession of thoroughbred dogs, and Kingsley found little to admire in this waif who apparently had clothed the frame of a dachshund with the coat of a Yorkshire, the ruff of a collie and the tail of a pug, and then dyed the resultant equation to an unlovely mud-color. His jaw was undershot, one ear bore marks of a recent fray and worst of all, he was distressingly cross-eyed.

The last knot yielded, and Nathalie rose, holding the dog against her shoulder and against her ruffled yellow hair.

"Isn't he cunning?" she asked, laughing gayly at the rumbling little growls that issued from the dog's throat.

Kingsley looked from the snarling, smutty muzzle to the brilliant girlish face, and he yielded, as any other boy would have done in his position.

"Very," he said meekly. "Let me take him to the car."

Nathalie's face fell.

"Oh, can't we walk home?"

"Not to-night. It's too far."

"But I'm not tired."

He bit his lip for a moment.

"Maybe not; but I am," he said shortly.

"You! And you're a boy," she answered mockingly.

Suddenly she remembered, and her face grew scarlet.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she exclaimed in incoherent penitence. "I forgot. You oughtn't to have walked down, in the first place. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Oh, that's all right," he said reassuringly.

"But you look perfectly tired out. I am a wretch not to have thought of things. Do you suppose I have done anything to you?"

"I'm not so fragile as all that. Come along. Here is our car."

Nathalie never dreamed of the utter weariness of her companion, nor yet of the mental anguish he suffered, as he boarded the crowded car, bearing in his arms the mongrel puppy. However, she was nervous and ill at ease, for his pallor frightened her, and she was convinced that he needed the one seat in the car much more than she did. He gave a sigh of relief, as he dumped the ungainly dog into Nathalie's lap.

"I wish you would take this seat," she

urged ; but he shook his head with a decision she dared not gainsay.

Only once more she broke the silence.

“I think I will call him Nicodemus,” she said reflectively. “He will be good company for Fizzums.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

“NO; really it is nothing serious,” Dr. Holden assured Harry Arterburn, the next morning. “Rex isn’t strong yet, and he has his ups and downs. I advised him to keep still and to take a vacation, to-day. He will be all right, to-morrow.”

“Sure?”

“Yes. You don’t need to worry over your pupil. He has done this before.”

“What brings it on?”

“It is more than I can tell. He came in, last night, completely done up, couldn’t eat any dinner and went right to his room. His mother has no idea what upset him. He had done something or other imprudent, most likely, and was ashamed to tell of it.”

Harry looked uneasy.

“What sort of thing, Holden? Exercise, or feasting?”

“Oh, exercise. The fellow wants to be an athlete, and he hasn’t the strength for it.”

"Do you know, I have an idea that my young sister may have had a hand in his downfall," Harry said thoughtfully.

"Miss Nathalie?"

"Yes. I don't mean that she abused him intentionally; but they were out together, in the afternoon, and Nathalie is a lusty young Amazon, tough and strong as a hickory stick. Even she confessed to feeling tired, last night. To my certain knowledge, they walked down to Twenty-third Street, and carried a ten-pound dog a good share of the way with them."

Dr. Holden whistled a dozen bars of *Gipsy John* with careful precision. Then he spoke.

"To—Twenty-third—Street! Arterburn! It is four miles to Twenty-third Street from your house, and that fellow hasn't walked eight consecutive blocks for a year and a half. What in thunder were they thinking of?"

Harry drummed impatiently on the table.

"Most likely he was thinking of Nathalie, and she wasn't thinking of anything at all, except having a good time. Confound them for a pair of crazy children! Do you think she can have done any lasting harm, Holden?"

“No; he will be all right in a day or two. Your sister will be good for him, Arterburn, provided she doesn't kill him. I have opposed a boys' school for him, for fear of what might happen, and I assure you I am not going to allow him to be slaughtered by the sister of his tutor. Let them frisk together, whenever they choose; only see that she works off a little of her superfluous energy in other directions. At least, I think she isn't likely to coddle Rex, and Aunt Babe has petted him to death.”

Harry laughed.

“You can't tell what Nathalie will do. She is systematically spoiling my young brother Ralph; but she lords it over Peggy with an iron rod. She is a dear girl, though; and she will be a mere lump of remorse, when I tell her about Rex.”

“Don't tell her, then.”

“I must, if only to prevent further catastrophe. Will Mrs. Barrett be very wroth at Nathalie?”

“No; she was just such another girl, herself, so she can't say much. Besides, she has taken a great liking to your sister.”

“That is a good thing for Nathalie.”

“Better than you know,” Dr. Holden replied quickly. “Aunt Babe doesn’t like everybody, and her friendship is worth the having. I think she means to have your sister here at the house a good deal, this winter.”

“I’m not sure,” Harry demurred; “that——”

Dr. Holden understood, and stopped him abruptly. The two young men had met often, during the past two weeks. Their friendship, based upon the discovery that they were twins, had grown upon the foundation of the same university and of kindred tastes. Harry remembered seeing a yellow-haired junior named Holden in the front row of seats in the chapel choir, and standing on the end of the glee club at his own commencement concert. The boy had attracted him; the man he admired exceedingly.

“Now look here, Arterburn,” Dr. Holden was saying; “don’t have any false pride in this business. Aunt Babe is no snob; but she has it in her power to be very nice to strangers in New York. However, you may be very sure she won’t do it, unless it suits her own sweet will. She won’t spoil Miss Nathalie, and you can rest assured that she won’t be a careless chaperon, for we all of us hate pre-

mature society girls. Aunt Babe is as sensible and simple as it is possible for a woman to be. She likes your sister, and she thinks it is good for Rex to have a girl around, now and then. That doesn't mean she expects you to swap invitations with her, or to dress and live as Uncle Giff wishes her to do."

"Thanks, Holden," Harry said briefly. "I wish all fellows could be as matter of fact."

"Fewer misunderstandings, if they were. I thought we might as well have it out. By the way, Mrs. Ainslee wants you to let her take Miss Nathalie down into Hester Street, some day. Are you willing?"

"Ye-es, if it is safe. I don't want Nathalie to run any risks, of course."

"You needn't worry. Betty is my especial chum, and I look out for that. Mrs. Ainslee goes down to Seward Park, once a week, and she thought Miss Nathalie might like to go with her."

"I'll tell Nathalie. And you think Rex will be all right in the morning?"

"Yes. I hope he will be ready for work, by that time."

However, he was not, nor on the next day, either.

The third afternoon brought a flushed and anxious caller to Mrs. Barrett's door.

"Why, Nathalie, dear, I am glad to see you," Mrs. Barrett said, as she came into the room.

Nathalie wasted no time in circumlocutions.

"Mrs. Barrett, what have I done to Rex?"

"Done to him?"

"Yes. I walked him too far, and I wouldn't take a car, when he wanted to, and he carried Nicodemus for me—Nicodemus is the dog we found—and I suppose I half killed him," she concluded in a remorseful outburst.

In spite of herself, Mrs. Barrett laughed. Then, as she caught Nathalie's look of hurt indignation, she grew suddenly grave again.

"Why, Nathalie dear, I hope you haven't been worrying over this."

To her intense mortification, Nathalie felt the hot tears rush to her eyes.

"I have, lots," she said forlornly.

"But it wasn't your fault. Rex should have told you."

"Boys never tell things. It is supposed to be a girl's place to know them of her own accord, without any telling."

Mrs. Barrett's mind went back to certain

chapters of her own healthy, objective girlhood.

"They don't, though, Nathalie," she said. "I was perpetually making blunders, myself. I'm sorry about Rex. He is a good deal under the weather just now; but it is his own fault. There was no reason you should suppose he couldn't follow your lead."

But Nathalie refused to be comforted.

"Harry told me he had broken himself to pieces somehow," she answered. "It was before I knew him, so I didn't think much about it. He looks healthy, and it never occurred to me he couldn't do a little thing like taking a walk. The boys I have known, could tramp around, all day long, the girls, too, for that matter. Down here, I feel like a Medusa, or a Minerva, or a—a something."

Mrs. Barrett suppressed a smile. Her young guest's mood was too penitential to allow her to classify her myths. Nathalie sat silent, for a moment, gazing steadily into the shrewd, kindly eyes before her.

"I don't fit in here," she said abruptly. "Everything goes wrong."

"What is the matter, dear? You mustn't worry any more about Rex."

“It’s not just Rex; it’s everything,” Nathalie said desperately. “This is one of the days when I feel as if I hadn’t a friend anywhere. The secret of it is, I wasn’t meant for the people here; I’m all out of joint with them, out of joint and cross. I didn’t get on with the girls at school; but I was just beginning to like Rex, and now ——”

“And now?”

“Now you won’t any of you want to see me again, nor think I have a particle of sense. If I’d been a proper kind of girl, I’d have had a mysterious warning that he was getting tired. But I don’t have mysterious warnings. I suppose it is because I am too selfish. Mrs. Barrett,” she looked up suddenly; “I don’t know why I am telling you this.”

“Because you are sure I will understand,” Mrs. Barrett replied promptly.

“Yes, that is the reason. Most people don’t understand. I have tried to talk to Cousin Eudora; but Cousin Eudora is Christian Science, and she wants to treat me for what she calls my maladjustment to psychic law. Peggy says that it is nothing in the world but bad temper, and I am beginning to think Peggy is about right. Harry is a dear and a

comfort; but Harry is a man, and there are some things that even he can't understand."

Without rising, Mrs. Barrett turned and took the girl's hands into her own strong ones.

"Nathalie," she said kindly; "I am glad you could say this to me. My little daughter only lived a month; you haven't any mother. But we both know that every girl has worries to talk over, that it is ever so much more healthful to have them out and discuss them with some other woman. Any girl who is worth her salt has her times of feeling that she doesn't fit into her place. We've all been through it again and again."

"What's the reason of it?" Nathalie asked impatiently.

"I don't know. Something comes all at once and rubs us the wrong way, and we feel as if everybody were out of temper with us, and we with everybody. With me, it was a question of keeping busy, if I wished to prevent it, and of going to work harder than ever, if I wanted to cure it."

"What did you do?"

Mrs. Barrett laughed.

"Everything I oughtn't, and a few things I ought. We were a large family without too

much money, and there was always enough to do."

"There are five of us, and no money to speak of," Nathalie said bluntly; "but there doesn't seem much for me to do."

"Who is housekeeper?"

"Cousin Eudora."

"Who acts as parlor maid?"

"She does, when it gets done."

"Lazy Nathalie! And who mends? Ralph alone ought to keep one woman busy."

"Cousin Eudora does the mending. She says I don't do it well enough."

"Learn, then."

"Who will teach me? She says it is easier to do it than to teach some one else."

"I will."

"You?" Nathalie stared at her hostess in amazement.

"Certainly. Don't you suppose I know how?"

"N—no. I didn't suppose you had to."

Mrs. Barrett frowned; then she smiled.

"Everybody has to, at some time or other, Nathalie; and everybody ought to learn to do it. If I had a dozen daughters, I would teach them all to patch and darn neatly, to make a

plain gown and to cook a plain dinner. Nobody knows when she will need to do it, for somebody else, if not for herself. What would you do, if your cousin were ill?"

"I don't know," the girl answered blankly. "I never thought of that."

Mrs. Barrett shook her head.

"I am afraid you would come to an untimely end by starvation. Because you know how to do things is no sign that you will have to do them. Deliver me, though, from a helpless girl who can't mend her own stockings nor bake her own bread. She may have a career or not, as she chooses; she must be fed, and she must be trim."

Nathalie flushed, as she recalled the contents of her chiffonier; but Mrs. Barrett, who had never beheld the chiffonier, laid the flush to another cause.

"It is different with you, dear child," she said more gently. "You haven't had a mother to teach you these things. I am only telling you what I believe in teaching a girl. There would be less nervous prostration among the mothers, if I had my way."

"But if you don't actually do any of these things, what's the use of your knowing how?"

Mrs. Barrett laughed.

"Nathalie, I made every stitch of this gown I have on."

"Mrs. Barrett! What for?"

"Because I like to keep busy, and to prove that I can do something besides pouring tea on Wednesdays."

"How did you know how?"

"I blundered for a while. Then I went to a good school of design, and took some lessons," she answered coolly.

Nathalie stared from neck to hem of the dark cloth gown.

"It doesn't look home-made a bit," she said wonderingly.

"I didn't intend that it should."

Nathalie drew a long breath.

"Mrs. Barrett, I supposed that only poverty people made their own gowns," she said thoughtfully. "I believe you have given me some new ideas."

"I meant to." Mrs. Barrett rose, still holding Nathalie's hand. "Now come into the library and see Rex."

"But I don't think he'll want to see me," Nathalie protested.

"I'll risk that. He hasn't been out for three

days, and he is sick of the sight of me. Besides, you mustn't shirk. If you can't turn cook and tailor yet, at least you can amuse Rex for an hour. Come."

It was rather a limp and languid Kingsley who rose to greet them, and Nathalie's remorseful mood came back upon her. His first words, however, proved the death-blow to any sentimental emotions she might have experienced.

"Hullo!" he said jovially. "How is that brute of a dog?"

"So's to be barkin'," she replied, dropping into Eudora Evelina's pet idiom. "When I left home, he and Fizzums were eating potato out of the same dish."

"Meals at all hours?"

"No; just plain lunch." Then, as she glanced at the clock on the mantel, she looked horrified. "Mrs. Barrett, do you mean that I have been here for more than an hour?"

"I mean that you are going to stay to dinner," Mrs. Barrett answered. "Take off your hat, while I telephone to your cousin. Mr. Barrett will take you home, or Dr. Holden. Rex needs somebody to play with."

CHAPTER TWELVE

“OH, he’s well enough ; but he doesn’t belong to our crowd.”

“Neither do I,” Nathalie retorted.

“Why not, I’d like to know.”

“Because I don’t. You know it as well as I do. Your mother is angelic to meward ; but your friends don’t invite me.”

“They don’t know you.”

“Some of them do. Some others could, if they cared to. Marie Syncoxe met me at dinner at your house, your birthday. I remember her because she wore so many rings, and ate her olives with her fork. She has never bowed to me since then.”

Kingsley stared moodily into the fire.

“Don’t you care,” he observed.

“I don’t,” Nathalie said flatly. “I don’t care the least bit to know that kind of people ; but I do care when a boy with brains and—well, enough ancestors to count, talks about Our Crowd with capital letters, and includes

that Marie Syncoxe and leaves out Adams Warren."

"But, really, he doesn't have anything to do with us."

"Who's us?" she demanded, regardless of grammar.

"Why, the ones in our street, and the dancing class, and—and ——"

Nathalie stared at him accusingly, while he stumbled on towards a full pause. When the pause had grown long enough to suit her, she broke it.

"Kingsley Barrett," she said slowly; "I think you are a horrid little snob."

His color came.

"So Fizzums told me, the first day I made his acquaintance."

"I'm sorry Fizzums had such bad manners; but that doesn't change my opinion of you. Moreover, there isn't any excuse for your being snobbish."

"My people are as good as anybody," he flashed out.

She clasped her hands on her knees and eyed him tranquilly.

"You needn't be so hot-headed about it. That is just what I was telling you. If you

were new-rich or something, one would expect you to be touchy about 'Our Crowd.'" Her dimples came, as she mouthed the words in saucy imitation of her companion. "As it is, when you've brains and ancestors and reputation belonging to your family, I really don't see why you should trouble yourself to care."

"Don't you care?"

"Yes," she confessed; "awfully; but not in the way you do. I'd like my friends to be the very nicest people in all New York; but there's always the question of what you mean by *nice*. I mean like your mother and Mrs. Ainslee. They go their own way and do as they wish, without caring a scrap whether their names are in the society columns or not. They know they are nice, and so there is no need for them to advertise the fact."

"What about Aunt Ted?" Kingsley inquired.

"I haven't seen her yet. I know I am going to be disappointed in her, though. You all praise her too much."

"I'll risk it. Aunt Ted is a trump."

"Like your mother?"

"Some people like her better. I don't," Kingsley replied tersely.

“You’d better not; I’m not going to. There aren’t many women who would do as much for their own relatives as she has done for Harry and me.”

Nathalie spoke truly. Mrs. Barrett was a woman who went her own wayward way. As a rule, she was considered haughty and eccentric; but there were a few people who were in a position to dispute the truth of such a statement. Among these few had been Percival Ainslee; among them were Harry and Nathalie Arterburn. Mrs. Barrett’s likings were governed by a law peculiar to herself. Like lightning, one never knew where they would strike. Wealth and social position mattered not one whit to her; gentle birth, pluck and independence counted for far more than any outward show. Woe betide the social pretender who came to her for sympathy! Mrs. Barrett could bless; she could also ban, and, all in all, her banning was a good deal more active process than her blessing.

She had liked Harry Arterburn from the start. She liked him for his eyes, and his manners, and his plodding patience in dealing with her freakish son. She liked him even

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better, when she came to know the detail of the fight he was making to hold together the large family on his hands.

“Fancy Mac *in loco parentis*!” she said to her husband, one night. “The dear boy could do almost anything; but I doubt if he could manage that situation. Mr. Arterburn is just his age, and would care just as much to frisk around bachelor New York. He is handsome and presentable; if he had come alone, Mrs. Myers would have taken him up and introduced him. She isn’t going to do anything for him that will involve those children, though; she is too shaky on her own pedestal to risk that. Do you remember the day Mr. Myers called on Ted? But I like Mr. Arterburn, even if his evening clothes do date from his sophomore year, and I intend to help him along.”

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She was as good as her word. By Christmas, the two older Arterburns were as much at home in her house as were the Ainslees themselves, and Mrs. Barrett often dropped in at the apartment, to assure herself that all was as it should be with the little ones.

“Peggy and Ralph are well enough; but I abhor that Fizzums infant,” she confessed,

after one such call. "However, my whole soul goes out to Eudora Evelina Shaw. She is so near-sighted that I expect she'll set fire to her curl-papers, some day, and burn up the apartment. I never fully enjoyed my medical training till now; but I like to hurl test cases of surgery at her, and see how she will prescribe for them. But, Mac, I can't see how Harry Arterburn is able to pay the bills for that establishment. He deserves a very spiky crown in the next world, to make up for what he is doing here."

"I am afraid he will get it sooner than he wants to," Dr. Holden responded grimly.

"Mac! What do you mean?"

"That, if he doesn't call a halt, he will go to pieces."

"Is he overworking?"

"Like a slave, and worrying, too. The worry is worse than the work. I had a long talk with him, to-day. Once started, he made a clean breast of things. He is bound he won't get into debt; but it takes literally every cent he earns, to keep his family moving. I advised him to ship them back to Vermont; but he is determined to keep them together as long as he can. I hear he is doing stunning

work at the university, and is sure to be advanced in his department. He would get famous, if only he had a free hand."

"What did he say about Rex?"

"Not much; but evidently Rex is doing better. Arterburn's present scheme is to get some writing to do, evenings. He can't stand the strain of it; but he needs the money. When it isn't rent, it's provisions; and when it isn't provisions, it is clothes. Aunt Babe, the poverty poor don't begin to have as hard a time as the ones who are struggling to keep their heads above water, and know that, if once they get into debt, they are doomed."

All the rest of the evening, Mrs. Barrett sat musing by the fire. As a result of her musing, she sent a note to Nathalie, the next morning.

"Good child to be so punctual!" she said, as she took possession of Nathalie's hat, two days later. "No, Rex; we don't want you. We are going to shut ourselves up behind locks and bars, and no man can set foot within the sacred precincts."

Up-stairs in Mrs. Barrett's room, the bed was covered with breadths of dark red cloth.

"Anything will do to practise on, and it seemed too bad for you to cut up new stuff for

your first attempt," she said, as she turned over the pile to show the quaint embroidered trimming underneath; "so I had this old gown of mine ripped and pressed. It ought to be large enough, and it won't be a serious matter if we do spoil it."

"But, Mrs. Barrett ——" Nathalie demurred.

"There is no *but* about it, my dear child. I promised to teach you a few of my tricks. People used to open their eyes over my home-made frocks; but I took especial pains to inform them of the fact, whenever I had one of them on, and now they consider it merely an eccentricity of genius. They will think the same of you; and really it is very good fun."

"I know; but the taking your gown! What will Harry say?"

"That you are a wise child, and know what is sensible." Then Mrs. Barrett grew grave. "Nathalie, for Harry's sake as much as for your own, I want to teach you all I can, to help you to be independent. It will take off just so much of his load, if you can do some of your own and Peggy's sewing, instead of hiring everything done. You are old enough to begin now. About this gown, I shall never

wear it again; and it is ever so much better to have it do somebody some good than to let it lie and gather moths. Now for your first lesson in dressmaking! Where is the measure?"

Ten days later, Nathalie sat in her own room, telling Fizzums a story while she took the finishing stitches on her gown. The story concerned itself chiefly with Daniel, and Fizzums, who was nothing, if not realistic, had constructed a lions' den of chairs in the midst of which he and Nicodemus sat enthroned, a chubby Daniel and a lanky and lantern-jawed lion. Nathalie, meanwhile, was sewing diligently and no more awkwardly than any novice would have done. Ten days of infinite patience had accomplished their work, and Nathalie was justly proud of her task.

"Nathalie," Peggy said, as she appeared on the threshold; "Miss Hilda Lancaster is here."

"Bah! I wish she had stayed at home," Nathalie grumbled. "Mrs. Barrett is coming at four, and I wanted to finish this first."

Daniel scrambled out of his den, upsetting the lion who, forgetful of his rôle, had fallen asleep with his snubby nose between his paws.

"Nathalie," he observed with prophetic

fervor; "vat isn't ve way to talk. You doesn't say vat about peoples till after vey is gone."

"Hilda has only just come," Nathalie retorted. "She will probably stay till time for dinner, and spoil all my afternoon."

"Why don't you take your sewing with you?" Peggy suggested.

"She would think I was horrid."

"Let her think, then."

"I believe I will." And Nathalie threw her work over one arm and took her Siwash basket under the other.

Hilda met her effusively.

"I'm so glad you have some work. What a sweet basket! It is shaped just like the Cup of the Grail; isn't it? I brought my lace-work with me." She unrolled a piece of pink cambric half-covered with braid and intricate knots. Then she looked across at Nathalie. "Don't you just hate to mend?" she asked sympathetically.

"This isn't mending; it's making," Nathalie assured her.

"Really? Really and truly?" Unconsciously her tone took on an accent of pity; then she changed the subject, with a conscious

air of relieving an awkward situation that exasperated Nathalie. "What do you think of my lace?" she asked, as she spread it over her lap.

Nathalie surveyed it with an indifference which was not wholly genuine.

"It is ever so pretty. How can you have patience to fuss with it, though?"

"It doesn't take so very long. I only began this piece, last month."

"Last month! And it's nothing but a collar. I made all this gown in ten days."

"Not all alone?"

"Ye-es, with a little showing and some help. Next time, I can do it all. I'd rather do something like this, that counts when it is done, than work for weeks and weeks and weeks on just a little scrap of coarse lace."

In whistling to keep up her courage, Nathalie had piped too loud a tune. She had spoken truthfully in saying that she would never have had patience to do such work as Hilda's; yet at heart she coveted the dainty collar. But Hilda, who had begun the collar with a view to Nathalie's birthday, had no means of reading her friend's real thought. Accordingly, she became exasperated in her

turn, and her voice went up a full octave, as she observed,—

“Of course I know you don't have time for fancy work; but I have all my things made at Delamerre's, so I don't have to fuss about clothes, after they're once ordered.”

“No; I suppose not. Still, I should think you'd like to do something for yourself, once in a while.” In her resentment, Nathalie forgot entirely of how recent birth was her own zeal.

“Oh, but it's so much more fun to do things for somebody else,” Hilda returned sweetly, as she ran her needle around and around a group of threads and then drew them up into a complicated knot.

“Something useful, then.” Nathalie jerked her own thread impatiently.

“This is useful enough for me. Nobody makes her own gowns, nobody that can afford to have them made, I mean.”

Nathalie's thread knotted, then broke.

“There does, too,” she said brusquely.

“Who, then?”

“Well,” Nathalie raised her head, as she dealt her blow; “Mrs. Gifford Barrett, for one.”

Hilda's father had paid the bills for many a music lesson, and Hilda had spent many an hour in strumming away at a certain *Alan Breck Overture* which always eluded her finger-tips.

"The composer's wife?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?" Hilda's accent was incredulous.

"Because she told me."

"Told—you?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Do you—know her?" The Westerner is a true hero-worshipper, and Hilda's tone was charged with awe.

"Of course," Nathalie replied airily.

"You really know, know to talk to, Mrs. Gifford Barrett?"

"Who is that who knows me? You, Nathalie? How do you do, child; and how comes on the gown?" Mrs. Barrett asked, as she followed Ralph into the room.

Nathalie sprang up to greet her, regardless of the gown which slid to the floor in an untidy heap. Hilda remained just long enough to be able to say that she had grasped the hand of the wife of a celebrity and to note

with envy the apparent good-fellowship existing between Mrs. Barrett and her friend. Then she took her departure.

"Now, Nathalie!" Mrs. Barrett said, as soon as the guest had gone.

Nathalie, secure in the knowledge that for once she had subdued Hilda's superior mind, linked her arm in that of Mrs. Barrett and led the way to her own room. To be sure, there was now no one but Ralph to be impressed by the little gesture of familiarity; and, in her truer moments, Nathalie herself would have been the first one to scout it as rank snobbishness. For the moment, however, she was left hurt and sore by Hilda's tone of worldly contempt, and she needed the solace of feeling that, even if she did make her own gowns, she had friends such as Hilda could never hope to win. Her pride was high; it mounted higher, as she tried on the pretty red gown and turned herself about for inspection. Then it had a fall.

"Your collar needs catching down, here on the right shoulder," Mrs. Barrett said critically. "Where are your pins, Nathalie?"

"In the tray."

"It is empty. No; don't move till I

have fastened it. Where can I get some more?"

"I'm not just sure where they are. You'd better look in the top drawer of the chiffonier," Nathalie answered, in the subdued voice of one who dares not so much as turn her head.

Mrs. Barrett evidently took the last words as a joke, and she laughed lightly. Then she went to the chiffonier and opened the drawer. Even by way of the mirror, Nathalie could see the laugh die out, and a look of utter consternation take its place.

"What's the matter? Aren't they there?" she asked faintly.

As a rule, Mrs. Barrett never withheld her opinions. Now, however, she made an heroic effort at self-control.

"I—I don't seem to see them," she said.

Nathalie crossed to her side and plunged both hands into the drawer.

"I was sure I saw a paper of pins somewhere here, yesterday." She scooped up a double handful of ribbons and collars and a glove or two, and tossed them on the bed. Then she made a fresh dive.

Mrs. Barrett eyed her with a disgust in

which no amusement was mingled. The third dive brought out a leather belt, a white silk necktie and a tasseled fan, mingled in an inextricable tangle, and Mrs. Barrett could contain herself no longer.

“Nathalie,” she said, with a severity which the girl never forgot; “I call that place a rat’s nest, not the drawer of a lady. If I were you, I would teach myself to be orderly, and let the sewing go for a while.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“ ‘An’ tickled ve tail
Of ve gweat—big—whale
Wiv a ten-penny nail, ’ ”

sang Fizzums.

Ensnconced in a great splint rocking-chair by the kitchen window, Fizzums was engaged in his post-prandial duty of rocking himself to sleep. To-day, however, he appeared to be suffering from acute insomnia.

“ Oh, my shole ! ” he yawned disconsolately. “ I don’t feel asleepy any, an’ vis by-low chair squawks awful, when it wocks fast.

‘An’ tickled ve tail
Of ve gweat—big—whale
Wiv a ten-penny nail.’

Vat must have been Jonah, ’nless ’twas Noah, only Noah wouldn’t have had a whale in ve ark, ’cause vere wouldn’t have been woom for ve nefalunt. Maybe ’twas ve Childwen of Izwel in ve Wed Sea.”

He sat up abruptly and looked about him.

“Cousin Vedowa isn’t here, an’ I don’t feel asleepy. I fink I will go an’ be naughty awhile now, an’ ven ve next time she’ll remember to give me some scassium bugs. Oh, vere vey are!”

He scrambled out of the depths of the chair and crossed the room to the table. His chubby nose was only just on a level with the table-top; but he raised himself on tiptoe to seize the coveted dainty. From the wilds of Vermont, Eudora Evelina had imported a liking for cassia buds, and her pockets were never without this stony delicacy which would have wrecked the teeth and sapped the gastric juices of any but a Christian Scientist. Peggy in her turn had developed the appetite to a less degree; but Fizzums knew no less degree in his likings. He begged for “scassium bugs” until Eudora Evelina dared give him no more. Then he went to her closet and rifled her pockets. His rosy lips sucked off the sugar coating, and left the hard stubs of spice for Cousin Eudora’s elderly jaws to crack.

“Vese are vewy hard scassium bugs,” Fizzums observed, after an interval; “an’ vey makes my teef vewy uncomfytable. I fink I will leave ve insides of vem for Cousin Ve-

dowa. She is older van me, an' her teef is stwonger van mine is." He extracted the buds from his lips and put them back on the table. "Now what is vere for me to do? Let me fink." He seated himself on the floor under the table and pondered for a space. "I fink I will make a Wed Sea," he remarked suddenly. "I will be Moses, an' Nicodemus can be ve old Phawaoh man. Vat stuff vat Cousin Vedowa had for Peggy's dwess will make ve sea, if vere's enough of it. Cousin Vedowa is asleepy now, vough, so maybe I'd better not asturb her. I know where she put it, so she needn't wake up to get it for me."

Ralph, meanwhile, was battering at Nathalie's door and demanding admission.

"I'm sorry, Ralph; but you can't come in. I am busy."

"So you said, an hour ago. This time, I must come in." Ralph's tone was imperative.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Let me in, and I'll tell you."

Nathalie threw open the door.

"What is it?" she asked.

But Ralph had halted on the threshold, apparently forgetful of his errand.

"That's what I should say," he replied.

Nathalie glanced at the débris heaped high on the bed, and at the empty drawers beside it, and she blushed guiltily.

"I'm putting things in order," she confessed.

"Oh, are you? I never should have suspected it." Ralph's tone was cynical.

"Well, I am," replied Nathalie tartly, for her temper was the worse for having lain awake, half the night before, in a futile endeavor to forget Mrs. Barrett's rebuke. It had been impossible for her to ignore the tone of disapproval, and it had hurt her keenly. For the first time in her motherless life, it had dawned upon her that disorderliness was something besides a matter for a joke. Granted that it was a subject for rebuke, she admitted to herself that she richly deserved just such a rebuke, and it swerved her not one whit from her loyalty to Mrs. Barrett. However, the first thing for her to do now, was to go to work to win back the approval she had lost. With this end in view, she had emptied the contents of all the drawers of the chiffonier into one huge pile, and, sitting Turk-wise on the bed beside them, she was busily engaged in sorting over the heap.

Ralph made a sudden pounce on the bed.

"There's my best red tie!" he exclaimed.

"Where did that come from?"

"Oh, don't upset that pile! That is in order," she remonstrated hurriedly.

"Maybe so. Anyhow, I want my tie, and I want to know where it came from."

"I borrowed it, one day when I couldn't find mine. I knew you wouldn't care."

"But I do care. I haven't set eyes on it since before Christmas. You've no business to steal my things, Nathalie."

"I didn't steal it; I only borrowed it."

"It is stealing, too, when you don't ask."

"How could I ask? You were at school."

But Ralph had returned to the pile.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" he said. "If here isn't my cardcase! What's this handkerchief marked H. M. A.?"

"That's Harry's. I used it to wrap up that centrepiece I made."

"Time you returned it, strikes me. Whose are the giglamps?"

"The what?"

"Giglamps — blinkers — glasses — whatever you choose to call them. You haven't come to spectacles; have you?"

"No. Where are there any?"

"Here. Let's look. I'll bet they are the ones Hal lost, last week. Yes, here is his name inside the case."

"Where did you find them?" Nathalie asked blankly.

"Here, tied up in your gray gloves. They are gray; aren't they, or do you call them drab? Anyhow, there they are. Nathalie, this chiffonier of yours is as good as a savings bank. You know you've got the stuff, and you know where it is; but you can't put your fingers on it, to save your skin. I lost the blacking brush, yesterday. Would you mind hunting to see which heap it is in?"

"Did you want me for something special, Ralph?" Nathalie interrupted.

"Jerusalem! I should say I did. Cousin Eudora told me to call you. She's sick."

"She?"

"Yes, it's glorified cramps or something. Most likely she has eaten too many of her percussion caps, or whatever Fizzums calls them. She said she didn't want any doctor, only you and some hot water and that souvenir spoon thing she always eats with."

Leaving her door wide open, Nathalie

hurried away in search of boiling water and the Eddy spoon, the corner-stone of Eudora Evelina's theology. As she came to the kitchen, she paused in the doorway, aghast, for the room bore every evidence of having been the scene of some terrible tragedy. Deep red stains dyed everything: the front of the sink, the table, the dishpan, the stove hearth. Scarlet pools were dabbled over the floor, and Nicodemus was tinged with scarlet from his ears to his toe-nails, while his back was apparently covered with a hairy blanket of deep cardinal red. But these stains were mere splashes, compared to the condition of Fizzums. His yellow hair was blotched with scarlet streaks and patches, his clothes dripped carmine, his face was the color of a ripe tomato and his hands were purple, as he bent over to paddle them in a Haviland soup tureen.

At the sight, Nathalie sprang forward towards her little brother. Against the general redness, her face stood out, white and wan.

"Oh, Fizzums! What is it? Where's the cut?"

Fizzums turned to look over his shoulder.

"What cut?" he asked so placidly that she

feared he was growing faint from loss of blood.

“What have you done to yourself, darling? Tell sister!” As she spoke, she caught him in her arms, thereby turning the front of her blue gown to a damp and sickly purple.

Fizzums wriggled out of her nervous clasp.

“It’s ve Wed Sea,” he explained a little petulantly; “an’ I’m Moses.”

“The Red Sea?”

“Yes, ve Wed Sea vat saved ve Childwen of Izwel. I made it out of ve stuff vat Cousin Vedowa had for Peggy’s pink dwess. Vere isn’t much of it; but maybe ’twill do. It’s just goin’ to ddown Phawaoh, if you’ll wait a minute. Nicodemus is goin’ to be Phawaoh, an’ I fink vere’ll be enough to ddown him in; don’t you?”

The revulsion of feeling was too great for Nathalie. Dropping on the floor into the midst of the sea, she began to laugh hysterically.

“Oh, Fizzums, how you frightened me! I was sure you had killed yourself.”

Fizzums shook his head gravely.

“No; vat isn’t ve way it was. Moses got saved. He climbed out over ve dwy land, an’

didn't wet his boots a bit. You be ve dwy land, Nathalie, an' I'll climb out over you. Ven, when Nicodemus comes, you can woll him off into ve water an' ddown him."

Too much exhausted to speak, or even to rise, Nathalie sat wiping the tears of mirth from her lashes. Then, all of a sudden, she sprang to her feet and gave a glance of utter consternation down at her sodden, red-stained gown.

The apartment was a small one, and the architect had prided himself upon the compact arrangement of the rooms. At the back of the parlor, doors led straight across the dining-room to the kitchen; on the opposite side of the parlor and across the hall, another door led into Nathalie's room. All three doors were wide open, and a ruddy and hilarious Nicodemus was making merry with the contents of Nathalie's bed.

On the threshold between hall and parlor stood Peggy, just returned from a walk; at Peggy's side were Kingsley Barrett and a stranger woman, tall, handsome and sumptuously clothed.

Escape was cut off, and Nathalie sought the safe shelter of the pantry. She was a fateful

second too late, for Kingsley had caught sight of her.

“Oh, Nathalie!” he called jovially. “Come here a minute. I want you to see Aunt Ted.”

For the time being, Nathalie regretted the informal hospitality which had given Kingsley the freedom of the house. Without him, she might have contrived to escape the notice of Mrs. Farrington who was absorbed in trying to look unconscious of the depredations of the erstwhile Pharaoh. She made a swift gesture of warning towards Kingsley; but, boy fashion, Kingsley either could not, or would not, heed.

“Merciful Moses!” he observed, quite unaware of the appositeness of his expletive. “Have you been opening a slaughter-house, Nathalie? I advise you to look after that ruby spaniel of yours. He has begun swallowing a pink sash, and you’d better catch hold of it, while there’s enough left outside of him to hang on to.”

“I was Moses, Mr. Wex Bawwett, an’ I maked a Wed Sea,” Fizzums explained, as he came strolling into the room, in no wise abashed by his gory appearance. “Ven Nathalie came in, an’ she sat down in ve middle

of ve sea, an' now she's all wed, too, wed as a wobin wedbweast."

Then Nathalie appeared, laughing and blushing.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Farrington," she said, half in contrition, half in merriment. "We aren't often in such a state as this; but to-day has broken all past records. No; don't shake hands with me. You'll ruin your gloves, if you do."

Mindful of the condition of her back breadths, she looked about for the chair which would be least damaged by her sitting in it. Mrs. Farrington interpreted the glance.

"Don't sit down," she said hastily. "It won't hurt you to stand, and Rex and I mustn't stop but a minute, anyway. Mrs. Barrett sent us up to see if you and your brother would come to dinner, to-morrow."

"I think so," Nathalie was beginning. "It is my afternoon in Seward Park; but I shall be home in time. Unless Harry telephones you that he has an engagement, we will ——"

"Nathalie! Nathalie Arterburn! Where in the land is that spoon?"

Down the narrow hallway came the *pad*, *pad* of stockinged feet, and Eudora Evelina,

an appalling vision of dark-brown dressing sack and light-brown curl-papers, swept into view. There followed a muffled exclamation of "Oh, my soul!" and the apparition vanished with more swiftness than it had come.

For a long moment, there was silence, and Nathalie tried to decide whether to laugh or to run away. For weeks, she had been looking forward to this meeting with Mrs. Farrington both because Mrs. Farrington was Mrs. Barrett's sister, and because she was a famous novelist. Girl-like, she had planned out all the details of the meeting, and had made them as picturesque as her mind could fashion them. After this, the reality was doubly disconcerting.

Then, regardless of her gloves, Mrs. Farrington turned and took Nathalie's hands into her own.

"Nathalie child, don't you mind it one bit," she said, with a merry frankness that won the girl's instant liking. "I've been through it all, myself, and I know just how it feels."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DOWN in Seward Park, that winter, Nathalie had been finding an outlet for her superfluous energies, an answer to her questions regarding the East Side. She never quite recovered from the shock of her first sight of the place. In company with Dr. Holden and Mrs. Ainslee, one day in early November, she had threaded her way through Hester Street. The push-carts heaped with fruit and vegetables and gloomy-hued calicoes, the soup cauldron bubbling over the curbstone fire, the women squatting in the doorways or wrangling among the carts, the children, half-clad, half-fed, huddling and pushing and squabbling in the gutters: all these had left a fadeless print upon her mind. It was so unlike the New York she had learned to know, so unlike the free, cleanly life of even the poorest child in Chesterton.

At Seward Park, she halted in amazement. Cold and dreary as was the day, the place

swarmed with children, bareheaded, barelegged. The swings were besieged. Under the open tent, the kindergarten ring was full, and a triple ring surrounded it, eager for a chance to join in the plays. In the athletic field beyond, the trapeze was dotted with half-grown boys, and the running track was the centre of an excited throng. Everywhere were rags, uncleanness and a hearty welcome for Dr. Holden who was known to be not only an active worker in the Recreation League, but also no mean antagonist in the sports at which he often took a turn, while Mrs. Ainslee joined the kindergarten ring under the canvas.

“What’s the use?” she had answered Nathalie. “Nothing to speak of. It only keeps the people off the streets and gives them a chance to harden their muscles and to think of healthy things. I suppose it keeps a few children from being killed somewhere else; and the boys who come here are so interested in the games that they forget to steal out of the push-carts and get themselves arrested. Healthy play and clean air are as good for the tenement youngsters as for us. Keep your eyes open while we are going home through

Hester Street, Nathalie, and you'll see the other side of it."

"Do you come often?" Nathalie asked. "They seem to know you."

"Once a week."

Nathalie glanced at the trim figure by her side.

"Don't—don't you get very dirty?" she inquired.

Mrs. Ainslee's laugh was good to hear.

"No; and even if I did, it would wash off. The children's hands are smutty; but it isn't catching, and—— Yes, Hyman, in a minute!—Come down with me for a few weeks, Nathalie, and you will see what I mean."

And Nathalie did see. Young as she was, she proved herself an efficient worker among the children; and the fact that, out of the swarming thousands of them, Sollie and Noah and tiny Abie with the twisted legs watched for her coming and hung about her with uncouth caresses, taught her a new lesson of gentleness and of tolerance for habits remote from her own. At first, she had felt interest and curiosity, mingled with some little fear; but, as the time passed on, she was astonished

to find herself growing genuinely fond of the ragged, unkempt youngsters whom at first sight she had regarded merely as subjects for impersonal charity.

It was not altogether charity, either. In her childhood, Nathalie had never cared for dolls, yet all her healthy girlhood responded to this vast human doll show before her, and her high, clear voice rang out contentedly in the chorus,

“Lazy Betsey, will you get up?
Will you get up? Will you get up?
Lazy Betsey, will you get up?
Will you get up, to-day?”

Laughing and rosy with the sting of the clean, cold January air which not even the noisomeness of Hester Street could sully, she halted in the middle of the ring to see whom she should choose. Across the floor, handsome, dark-eyed Hyman Speevock was winking and beckoning to her, and she half started towards him. Then her glance fell upon a newcomer to the ring, a shapeless little bunch of humanity with a wan, blue, elderly face and a thatch of tea-colored hair. The child was eyeing her with an apathetic curiosity in which there was no expectation of receiving

any personal attention. Nathalie hesitated, cast a longing glance at Hyman, then beckoned to the tiny stranger.

“He can’t walk none,” his sister explained shrilly. “I had ter lug him here ; but he likes ter pertend he kin play, like de udder kids.”

Under his grime, the child flushed hotly, and two appealing eyes peered up at Nathalie. The next minute, the girl had picked up the little bundle of wretchedness, cuddled him against her shoulder and carried him into the middle of the ring.

“But he wanted to do just as the others did,” she said tempestuously to Mrs. Ainslee, on their way home. “His eyes showed it. It must be horrid to have to stand on the edge of things and look on. I like to be in the middle, even if it is nothing but the Seward Park kindergarten ring, and I always feel sorry for the forlorn little ones who don’t get taken inside the fun. They try to look as if they didn’t care ; but you can be sure they do. Now I must hurry home. Harry and I are to be at Mrs. Barrett’s, to-night, you know.”

To her surprise, she found Harry stretched out at full length on the couch in the dining-room.

“What is the matter? Are you ill?” she demanded breathlessly.

“No; only somewhat tired and very lazy. Is it time I was dressing?”

“Not yet. Are you sure you are all right?”

Her tone was anxious. Harry's face was thinner than when he had come home from Germany, and under his dark blue eyes she saw the darker blue lines.

“Fit as a fiddle,” he answered. “I was only improving the shining hour with a little nap. You know we always stay till late at the Barretts', and I thought I would get in my beauty sleep beforehand.”

Nathalie tossed her hat and coat into a chair, and then stood looking down at her brother. He returned her gaze with a half-mocking smile.

“Well, chum?”

“What makes you go, Harry?”

“Because I want to.”

“But do you feel able?”

“Able! I'm all right. I was only a little more tired than usual. Rex had one of his cantankerous days, the first in a long time; and, up at the university, I had a talk with that fellow Sinclair. I warned him, a week

ago. To-day, he told me that, if I conditioned him, he would appeal to the Dean. It's a case of shirking and of injured innocence; but it is exasperating."

Nathalie pushed him along, and dropped down on the couch at his side.

"Hal," she said slowly, as she made havoc with the parting of his hair; "you are working too hard."

"What makes you think so? Go easy, Nathalie! Remember that it's my hair."

"No matter. You are my brother. If I own you, I own your hair also. I don't think so; I know so."

"I thought it was mine," he remonstrated; "but, if you insist, I suppose I shall have to give in."

She frowned intently.

"I don't mean the hair, Hal; I mean the work. You are doing too much."

"Well?"

"Well, you mustn't."

There came a swift flash in the dark blue eyes.

"How can I help it, chum? We must live."

"Harry! Is it as bad as that?" she cried in alarm.

But already he repented of his momentary yielding to the mood of a black half-hour.

“Not that exactly; still, it takes money to keep us going.”

“I know that, Hal; but can't we keep going with less?”

He shook his head.

“Cousin Eudora has reduced things to about their lowest terms, Nathalie. She is a splendid manager. But there are some things we must have. Your school is one of them.”

“I won't go,” she said flatly.

“You must. I can't have my chum only half educated; there would be no comfort in having her for a chum.”

“Then I can study alone.”

“You can't, and I can't afford the time to see to your lessons. No, Nathalie, you must keep on as you are doing.”

“Then I am going to help you earn some of the money,” she said obstinately.

He laughed.

“I don't see how you can tutor Rex; and I have a theory that the powers on the Heights may not consent to give you my classes.”

She pondered for a moment, while his eyes rested upon her proudly. Even if she were

useless and a source of expense, it was good to have this dauntless, spirited girl for a sister.

“But, Harry, you can’t keep on working so hard,” she urged. “You are growing thin, and you haven’t any appetite. You must eat more. Just think how homely you’ll grow, if you don’t.” She laughed; but there was an odd break in her voice. Then she went on, “You are working on Rex, three hours a day, and that is enough for one man. Then you have your classes, and this horrid writing you are doing—Harry, why can’t I do the writing?”

“Because somebody would have to read it,” he said, laughing. Already he felt the better for his sister’s coming. Her ceaseless touch on his hair was soothing to his tired-out brain, her voice was low and pleasant to his ears, the whole poise of her body, as it nestled against him, was suggestive of her love and her willingness to help, suggestive, in fact, of their chumship.

“It’s mean to twit on facts,” she retorted. “My writing is pretty, even if it isn’t plain. Besides, with a little practice, I could write as straight and square a hand as a judge of the supreme court.”

"You've enough else to do."

"What?"

"Your slumming, for instance," he suggested teasingly.

"Charity begins at home. Besides, I like to keep busy. People who are good for anything always are busy; the more they do, the more they can do."

He stretched out his hand and took hold of her heavy braid of yellow hair.

"You are beginning to live up to that idea, chum. It is only about four months since you were bewailing your uselessness. Now I should find it hard to get on without you."

"Truly, Harry?"

"Truly, chum."

To his surprise, her head went down on his shoulder for a minute. Then she sat up abruptly.

"Then it is all settled about the writing. Come, lazy boy, it is time you were prinking."

The blue lines under his eyes were still in evidence; but there was no trace of languor in Harry Arterburn's manner, while he was being introduced to Mrs. Farrington and listening to her account of the making of the

Red Sea. Nathalie, meanwhile, had been appropriated by Kingsley.

"It's an age and a quarter since I have seen you," he said rebukingly.

"A day and a quarter, you mean. You were at our house, yesterday."

"Yes, but I didn't see you; you were invisible under your hectic flush."

"What did your aunt say?"

"That you stood it like a trump. How many yards of ribbon did Nicodemus eat up?"

"I haven't had time to count; I have been too busy, washing up the prints of his feet. Rex Barrett, if ever I rescue another dog ——" She paused expressively.

"It won't be when I'm around. I was laid up for a week, as the result of your humane act. Next time, let the beast go, and look out for the man at your side."

"It was bad of me," she admitted; "but I didn't suppose you would come to grief so easily. Rex," she added abruptly; "I am worried, awfully worried, about Harry."

"What's the matter with Mr. Arterburn? He looks jolly as a grig."

"Yes, now; but he isn't right. He is thin,

and he gets tired too easily. The fact is, he works too hard."

"Why doesn't he cut some of it, then? I'd be willing to let him off, four or five mornings a week, for my share," Kingsley returned composedly.

"You'd much better try to make it easier for him, when he does come," Nathalie answered a little more sharply than she realized.

Kingsley stiffened perceptibly.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

Nathalie hesitated. In her usual headlong fashion, she had taken the bull by the horns, before stopping to consider how she was going to let go again without danger to herself.

"I—I——" she stammered.

"What do you mean?" Kingsley repeated rather haughtily.

Nathalie gave a terrified glance over her shoulder. No help was near; yet it was rather a relief that neither was any one near enough to have heard her blunder. For an instant, her eyes rested upon Harry's face. The blue shadows, and the scarlet spots in his cheeks gave her courage; she faced Kingsley again.

"I've gone so far, there's no use in my beat-

ing about the bush," she said, with a nervous laugh. "You know, yourself, that you are a trial to your friends. You tease me till I am half wild; but I don't care. I do care, though, when you tease Harry, for he minds it more than I do. He has a conscience, and it gets in his way. He knows he is hired to teach you things, and he does his best. When you get silly and cranky, and don't try to learn, it makes him frantic."

"If he feels that way about it, why doesn't he chuck the whole business?" Kingsley inquired dispassionately.

Nathalie turned as red as the gown she wore.

"Because he can't afford it," she said defiantly.

Afford was a word not included in Kingsley's vocabulary. He looked up questioningly.

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that he needs the money, must have it, to pay our bills. And, what is more, I mean that you are making him worry until he is about half ill."

"I — But I like Arterburn," Kingsley said defensively.

“So you said, once before; but you take queer ways of showing it.” Suddenly she paused and held out her hand with a girlish, winning frankness. “I don’t like to scold and be horrid, Rex, and I know I’ve been saying things I’ve no right to say; but, you see, Harry is all there is of my world. I know he likes you and wants to get on with you, and I know you tease the life half out of him. What’s the use of it? If he really and truly must work, and you can do more than anybody else to make his work easy, why aren’t you willing to do it?”

Flushed with the earnestness of her own appeal, her face framed in the fluffy halo of her bright hair, she made a goodly picture to look upon. From across the room, Mrs. Farrington saw it and nodded approvingly at her husband while, for a minute, the thoughts of them both went backward to the girlhood of Theodora McAlister. At Nathalie’s side, however, Kingsley was blind to the picture she made. He only saw the tired face of his tutor, as it had looked, that morning, a tired face with downcast eyes and lips which were not quite steady; and the face haunted him.

The silence lasted for a perceptible time.

Then Kingsley faced the girl without flinching.

“I’ve been a cad,” he said gruffly ; “but, on my honor, I’ll stop it right now.”

And he kept his word.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“ **A** N’ vis I ask — No ; Nathalie, you needn’t say ve *Amen*; I’m engineering vis—ask for Jesus’ sake. Amen ! Nathalie ? ”

“ Well, dear ? ”

“ Is it a twuly Jesus, or just a make-believe one ? ”

“ A truly one. Why, Fizzums ? ”

“ Ven I wants to wite to him. ”

“ What for ? ”

“ To send him a wound O, a kissing O. Would Jesus be mad, Nathalie ? ”

Nathalie’s arm tightened around her little brother. At such instants, Fizzums seemed to her very near the Kingdom. Unhappily, such instants were short-lived.

“ Poor little Jesus ! ” he murmured sleepily. “ Had to go back up to heaven, an’ couldn’t have any more fun. Nathalie ! ”

“ Yes, Fizzums. ”

“ Nathalie, if I should die — I don’t fink

I'm going to die, 'cause I ain't sick any; but ven I might, you know—but, if I should die, I want you to fall wight down dead, too. Ven we could be bewwied in one gwave. 'Twould be so snoozy, Nathalie."

"I wouldn't think about dying, Fizzums," Nathalie remonstrated.

"But I likes to," Fizzums responded unexpectedly. "It's going to be awful funny to be a nangel an' have fevvers twailin' wound your legs an' stickin' up atween your toes. I hope mine will be gween, Nathalie, bwight blue an' gween, just like ve pawwot in ve corner dwunky store."

But Nathalie felt that it would be unwise to prolong the conversation and, with a hasty good-night, she left Fizzums to his dreams.

Out in the dining-room, Peggy and Ralph were buzzing over their lessons like a pair of indignant bees. Nathalie paused long enough to correct Peggy's impression that Madagascar was situated in Behring Sea, and to advise Ralph to spell medicine with two I's. Then she went to join Harry in front of the parlor fire.

"How does this look?" she demanded, thrusting some loose sheets of paper into his hands.

“Good! Better than I can do,” he said heartily.

Pleased at his tone of enthusiasm, she dropped down on the rug at his feet, while Nicodemus, with a clumsiness which suggested leaden weights attached to his paws, crossed the room and clambered into her lap.

“Then you’ll let me begin, Monday night?”

“Really, it isn’t necessary, Nathalie.”

“Maybe not; but I want to do it, just the same. We’ll work together, and it will be ever so cozy, Harry. I probably sha’n’t be as quick as you are; but it will save you a little time. How is Rex?”

“So angelic that I am afraid he isn’t well. I can’t imagine what has come over the fellow, these last weeks. He has done more work, real, solid work, than in all the rest of the time I have had him.”

Nathalie laughed contentedly to herself.

“Rex isn’t a bad fellow, Harry. He has his good points like the rest of us.”

“He wouldn’t be his own mother’s own son, if he hadn’t. I hope he will amount to something, Nathalie, and I rather think he will.”

"Has Mrs. Farrington gone?" Nathalie asked idly, as she parted the sparse hair on Nicodemus's back.

"To Mrs. Ainslee. She stays there for about a week longer, I think. By the way, Nathalie, Mac Holden was telling me something about an accident in the playground. What was it?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard of any. Was it in the papers?" She looked up anxiously.

"I didn't see it. He said you would know the child. It was a little, deformed fellow who was knocked out of one of the swings."

"Mikie Kranzner?"

"Yes, some such pretty name. He was Mike, I know. Was he a friend of yours?"

She ignored the teasing question.

"Was he killed?" she asked sharply, for in the past two or three weeks, she had grown strangely fond of the shapeless little bunch of humanity who answered to the name of Mikie.

"No; but a good deal hurt, Mac said. They supposed he was dead, when they picked him up. Mac happened to be down there, and you

know he is always loaded with an emergency outfit. When they took the child home, they thought perhaps he might pull through."

Nathalie stared intently into the fire for a few minutes.

"Poor little Mikie!" she said at last. "I'm not sure I want him to pull through. His mother dropped him out of the window, when he was a baby; and there isn't enough life left in him to be worth living. He does have a very good time with what there is of himself, though."

"And I suppose he is only one case out of hundreds, here in the city." Harry's tone was thoughtful. "It's no use to worry about it, Nathalie. If you've helped on one youngster a little, it's better than nothing."

"I think I'll go down there, to-morrow," she said, heedless of his last words. "Could you go with me, Harry; or are you too tired?"

"I'll go. Perhaps Mac will be going down, too."

However, on the morrow, Nicodemus took matters into his own paws, and effectually drove from the mind of his young mistress all thought of errands of mercy.

Kingsley came over early, that Sunday morning.

"Hullo!" he remarked genially, as he came swinging into the room. "Anybody here going to church? If so, I'm your man for an escort. The pater and mater have struck, and I'm afraid to go alone."

"But we weren't going," Nathalie demurred.

"Speak for yourself, Nathalie," Peggy observed pertly. "I am going, and so is Ralph."

"Yes; but Rex doesn't want to go with a pair of children," Nathalie replied mercilessly.

"But why aren't you going, Nathalie? They need you to fill up the church. What will Mr. Holmes do without you?"

Fizzums looked up from his picture book.

"I'm vewy sowwy for poor Mr. Holmes," he said gravely; "but vere's no use in my going. I couldn't fill up ve church."

"No; but Nathalie could. She fills all space, when she gets started," Kingsley said, laughing. "Come along, Nathalie."

"But I was going down to see Mikie."

"Bother Mikie! Come and take Rexie to church."

"But he's almost dead."

“That’s where I score; I’m not. A living Rex is better than a dead Mike. Go and get on your hat, and come along.”

Harry declined to join them, on the plea of some unwritten letters, and, at the last minute, it transpired that Peggy’s feelings were injured, and that she had decided to remain at home. Some moments were lost in discussing the matter, and the bells had stopped ringing, before Kingsley, Nathalie and Ralph were fairly in the street.

“Let’s hurry,” Nathalie urged. “I do hate to be late to things.”

“Don’t kill me again,” Kingsley reminded her. “You nearly did for me once, you know; and I don’t want to follow Mikie’s example. There are a few worse things in the world than being late to church.”

And so the event proved.

In their hurry to be off, no one remembered that Eudora Evelina had bidden Nicodemus to go to play by himself in the back yard, and had provided him with an old stocking of Ralph’s, by way of toy. No one knew that the alley gate was open. No one saw the dog of many breeds creep stealthily along the street in the wake of his mistress.

The processional was ended, and the *Venite*, and the congregation were settling themselves to listen to the reading of the First Lesson, when there came a patter of feet up the middle aisle. The patter was followed by an inquiring "Woof?" in a deep contralto voice; and every head turned, with the precision of clockwork.

Nathalie and the boys had been so late in reaching the church that the Arterburn pew had been filled. Accordingly, they had been ushered to a place near the head of the middle aisle where they easily could divide public attention with the rector himself. With this thought in her mind, and heedful of her past training in decorum, Nathalie had forborne to look over her shoulder at the first sensation. A second, and louder, and still more inquisitive "Woof?" proved to be too much for her curiosity, however, and she turned around hastily to see Nicodemus, as unkempt and unwashed as Mikie himself, come strolling up the aisle towards her, with a long black stocking trailing negligently from his smiling jaws.

The sight was so appalling that she abruptly punched Ralph with her elbow, to call his attention and demand his sympathy. Unfor-

tunately, Ralph was lost in a vision of football, and was quite oblivious of the sacred place in which he found himself.

"Huh?" he observed interrogatively.

"Sh! Keep still! It's Nicodemus!" Nathalie whispered distractedly. "What can we do with him?"

But Nicodemus promptly settled that question by doing with himself. With the torn stocking still dragging after him, he mounted the chancel steps with the pompous dignity of a whole bridal party, and went to sniff at the rector's heels. Apparently he was pleased with the result of his scrutiny, for he laid the stocking like a tithe at the rector's feet, backed off for half a dozen paces and sat himself down to survey the scene at his leisure. For one moment, he broke his dignity by giving a vigorous sneeze; then he rallied and became once more a picture of reverential attention, with the tattered, war-worn ear next the rector pointed upright towards the reading-desk, while the other lopped dejectedly over his less accurate eye.

There was every indication that he would have listened, unmoved, to the reading of the entire book of Job; but unhappily Nicodemus

had no ear for music, and the high F which opened the *Te Deum* jarred upon his nerves. At the first jubilant note of the choristers, he gave a terrified yelp, scurried down the steps again, and vanished in the direction of the street.

During the *Te Deum*, Nathalie sat with bowed head which, however, was no indication of a prayerful spirit. She was thankful that the anthem was a long and intricate one, for it gave her time to regain her self-control. She could feel Kingsley gently shaking by her side, and she devoutly wished that some over-zealous warden would put him out of the church. Then the Second Lesson came, and the *Jubilate*, and at last she dared look up once more and take heed of what was passing around her.

In the hush of the collects that followed, once more she became conscious of the muffled patter of shaggy paws on a velvet carpet. Desperately she stopped her ears and tried to fix her mind upon the service. She knew that Kingsley was eyeing her stealthily; and her desire for his removal grew apace. The patter came near and nearer, then halted. From between her clasped fingers, Nathalie peered

out into the aisle. The taste of Nicodemus was plainly for the more quiet forms of worship; and again he had come to sit in rapt attention to the service. This time, however, he had not ventured within range of the choristers; but prudently had taken his seat in the aisle just opposite the pew where his mistress had been placed.

"Oh, get him; can't you?" she begged Kingsley, in an agonized whisper.

Kingsley nodded. The aisle was a broad one, and he braced himself firmly on his knees for the effort. Then an arm swept out in the circular gesture of one catching flies, and a gray-gloved hand grasped the nearer hind leg of Nicodemus.

"Wow-ow!"

The voice was soprano, this time, and it expressed pained surprise. Then Nicodemus looked rebukingly over his shoulder, pulled his leg away from the detaining hand and hitched himself a few inches nearer the other side of the aisle.

A thin gurgle of laughter escaped from Ralph's lips; but Nathalie suppressed him, and together she and Kingsley waited anxiously for the final catastrophe which they

felt sure would come upon them in one form or another at the paws of the merciless Nicodemus. It did come, and sooner than they expected.

Saint Barnabas the Apostle was justly proud of its choir, and it had been in a spirit of haughty ostentation that this choir had announced its intention of singing an ancient Latin hymn lately set to music by a famous composer. It was something of a musical feat, since the score was difficult and unaccompanied by the organ, only the full, rich choir of human voices rising to the Gothic arches of the venerable church.

There was an expectant hush over the great congregation; there was a single chord from the organ. Then, clear and sonorous and jubilant, the chorus rang out in the good old words of the hymn of Thomas à Kempis,—

*“Adstant angelorum chori
Laudes cantant —”*

A wail mingled with the singing, low and sorrowful at first, then loud, piercing, gusty, rising even above the shrill voices of the sopranos. In the corners of the church, people were turning to cast angry glances at the organist; but no such sound ever came from

an organ created by mortal hands. It was like the howling of an angry Banshee.

Nicodemus had provided an accompaniment.

Sitting on his haunches at the head of the aisle, his nose pointed upward to the Gothic arches, his frayed ears sagging backwards and his eyes goggling with excitement, he had joined in the chorus with a lusty determination to drown it out, or to die in the attempt. Full-throated and brazen-lunged, he was fast accomplishing his baleful ends.

There was a moment of indecision. Then Kingsley rose to his feet. His teeth were fast shut, his face was damp; but his courage held good to the end of his task. Seizing Nicodemus in the very midst of a ten-bar *B in Alt*, he took him in his arms and started down the aisle in the face of the hilarious congregation. But Nicodemus refused to be diverted from his purpose. Half-freeing himself by divers kicks and snappings, he wriggled about in Kingsley's arms until, over the boy's shoulder, he again faced the chancel. Then once more he took up his interrupted theme at the precise beat where he had dropped it.

And so, persevering to the last, Nicodemus

was borne away, leaving a trail of howls behind him, just as the choir dropped into the fugue,—

“*Concors vox est omnium,*”

and the congregation bowed its head and wiped the tears from its eyes.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DR. HOLDEN frowned over his prescription pad.

"I can't put a name to it, Hal; but something is wrong somewhere."

"I'm not after a name. What I want is the medicine to get rid of the thing itself."

"There is some slight connection between the two," Dr. Holden said dryly.

"Eudora Evelina calls it spring fever," Harry suggested.

"Eudora Evelina is a—well, a Christian Scientist. If she had pinned her faith to herb teas, she would have been a first-rate nurse of a certain sort. How many of these dizzy turns did you say you have had?"

"Three; but the first one didn't amount to much."

"And you're not sleeping?"

"Not more than an hour in a night."

"You know the tortures of the condemned, then. How is your temper?"

“Detestable.”

They both laughed. Then Dr. Holden answered,—

“I don't doubt it. As I have said before, Hal, you are killing yourself with overwork, and I honestly think it is for a mistaken notion of duty. What better off are these children, here in the city?”

“My father wished it,” Harry replied briefly.

“Perhaps he did in theory; but he neglected to take into account the practical workings out of the case. It costs you three times as much to keep them here, and what do you gain?”

Harry looked up at him, with a steady, determined gleam in his blue eyes.

“Isn't it something for us to hold together?”

“No; not under the circumstances. Country life and country ozone are better for those children than even your moral training and example. Moreover, they will need you more, five or six years from now, than they do, to-day; and, at the present rate of progress, you will be dead by that time. Still moreover, you are spoiling your own future. Without this load on your shoulders, you would have a

chance to grow on your own account. There's the making of a professor in you and, in time, the chance of a permanent reputation. Instead——”

“If you have finished, I think I will go. Your time ought to be too valuable for you to waste so much of it on one patient.”

Dr. Holden rose and put his hand on his friend's shoulder. Seen side by side like this, there was a curious contrast between the two men. Exactly equal in age, similar in birth, breeding and education, they yet stood far apart, the one marked with the strength of conscious success, the other bowed in the weakness of dreaded failure, a failure in no wise caused by his own failing. But because McAlister Holden had walked to manhood by easy paths, he was none the less a man. Strong and gentle, stern and loving, he was a worthy grandson of the Dr. McAlister whose name he was proud to bear. Now, as he bent over Harry Arterburn, his blue eyes were very tender and pitiful.

“I'm not altogether a brute, Hal, and I'm not talking at random. I saw Clark, yesterday, and he told me about your collapsing in the class, the other day. You don't want too

many such attacks. Something has got to be done about it. What shall it be?"

"Do you think they are serious?" Harry asked steadily.

"Dangerous, no; serious, yes. It is a warning that you must slow up a little."

"How can I slow up, Mac? It is out of the question."

Dr. Holden forgave the petulance of the tone. Even in the course of his short professional life, he had seen desperate men before, and he knew how to account for their moods.

"Give Rex a vacation, pack off the youngsters to Vermont with the excellent Miss Shaw, and take a coast voyage in the Easter holidays."

"What about Nathalie?"

"I counted her as one of the youngsters."

Harry looked up at his friend as if a new idea had suddenly dawned upon him and he found it unpleasing.

"Why, Mac, I really don't see how I could get on without Nathalie," he said blankly.

"She's a good sort," Dr. Holden said cheerily; "and I don't wonder you enjoy her. Still, you oughtn't to have a care, beyond your professional work."

Harry rose, shrugging his shoulders.

“Got to,” he said laconically. “The worst of it is that I can’t afford even to die in harness. I am bound to keep alive, somehow or other; so you may as well find out a way to patch me up and keep me in working condition.” He turned to the door; then he paused irresolutely. “You’re a good fellow, Mac; and you won’t say too much about this talk of ours; will you? I don’t want it to get about that I’m not well; it might affect my chances, you know.”

And Mac understood, and kept his secret.

Down in Hester Street, that afternoon, the east wind blew up from the river, raw and penetrating. It whistled around the corners and wheezed through the alleys; but along the middle of the street, it found a straight path where it could bluster and rage to its heart’s content. March was going out like a whole family of angry lions, and, even in her fur jacket, Mrs. Ainslee shivered and drew back a little, as she faced the blast.

It had snowed in the night. With the coming of the dawn, the snow had turned to rain, and the pavements and roadway of Hester Street were covered with two inches of slush

whose dreary gray was dappled with the soaked and sodden refuse that lay scattered everywhere. It was Friday, market day, and the push-carts stood in two unbroken lines, each cart the centre of a chattering, gesticulating group of bareheaded, blowsy women and silk-hatted, frock-coated, long-bearded men. Along the sloppy sidewalks, the children were splashing and sliding hither and thither, their tracks marked by round black holes or straight black canals in the midst of the gray slime. All of the children were bareheaded, a few wore uncouth, shapeless wraps; but many of them were in the same calico gowns they had worn in August, and their shoes leaked water and mud at every seam. Heedless of the wind that twisted their lank hair about their necks, they were shouting and laughing in their sport, now breaking off long enough to engage in a fierce hand-to-hand battle, now making a swift raid upon some unguarded push-cart, then resuming their good-tempered play as abruptly as they had left it off.

“Why don't they all die?” Nathalie said, as they passed group after group, pausing now and then to reply to a word of recognition.

Mrs. Ainslee pulled her collar more closely around her ears.

“It is one of the mysteries of life, Nathalie. Peggy and Ralph wouldn't endure a day of it; these children grow up in this fashion. And there is so little we can do for them. Just the bare living can't be very satisfactory; and all our playground work isn't a drop in the bucket.”

“It helps, though,” Nathalie said sturdily. “Even if we only get at one child in an hundred, it is worth the doing. For my part, I shall always be glad of what I have done, because of the fun Mikie has had out of it.”

“Poor little Mikie!”

Nathalie turned on her with flashing eyes.

“Not poor a bit! He was too plucky for that. I am not sure I am sorry he is going to die. He never could have held his own, down in this place, and he would better be out of it and safe. But—I shall miss him.”

The silence between them was unbroken, as they went on for another block; then, turning into a dark hallway, they stumbled up some wooden stairs which showed but dimly under the light of a single gas jet. At a door on the

third landing, they paused to knock. Dr. Holden opened the door to them.

"Come in," he said cheerily. "Mikie has been waiting for you."

Even to Nathalie's unaccustomed eyes, it was plain that Mikie would wait but a little longer. Above the untidy heap of clothing which formed his only coverlet, his face showed wan and pinched. Only the restless, eager eyes told that life was still in his keeping; yet his whole face brightened, when he saw Nathalie.

"Say, teacher, d'yer come down, purpost ter see me?" he said, in a faint, piping little voice.

"Didn't I say I would come again, Mikie?" she asked, as she sat down on the edge of the old bed, and took his claw-like hand into her strong, warm grasp.

"Me mudder said ye wouldn' come, no sech a day as dis; but I bet yer would. Teacher?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Dey says I's goin' ter die. Not him." He let go Nathalie's hand long enough to point to Dr. Holden; then the thin claw closed on her fingers again. "He never said it; 'twuz me mudder an' de rabbi. I do' wan' ter

die. Dere won' be no playgroun's dere, an'—
an'—no fun."

There was a short silence. Then Mikie spoke again.

"Dey alwuz says I'd die, teacher. I wuz a twin, an' twins don' never live ter grow up. Dey's an unlucky t'ing, however dey comes out. One while, I t'ought I'd stick it out an' live; but 'twan' no uset."

"Mikie, you are talking too much and getting all tired out," Dr. Holden interposed, in the same cheery tone he had used before. "Perhaps, if you are a very good boy, Mrs. Ainslee will sing something to you and you will drop to sleep."

There was a roguish gleam in the dark eyes, as they rolled up towards Mrs. Ainslee.

"I'd radder have my teacher," he objected.

"Sing, Nathalie," Mrs. Ainslee said softly.

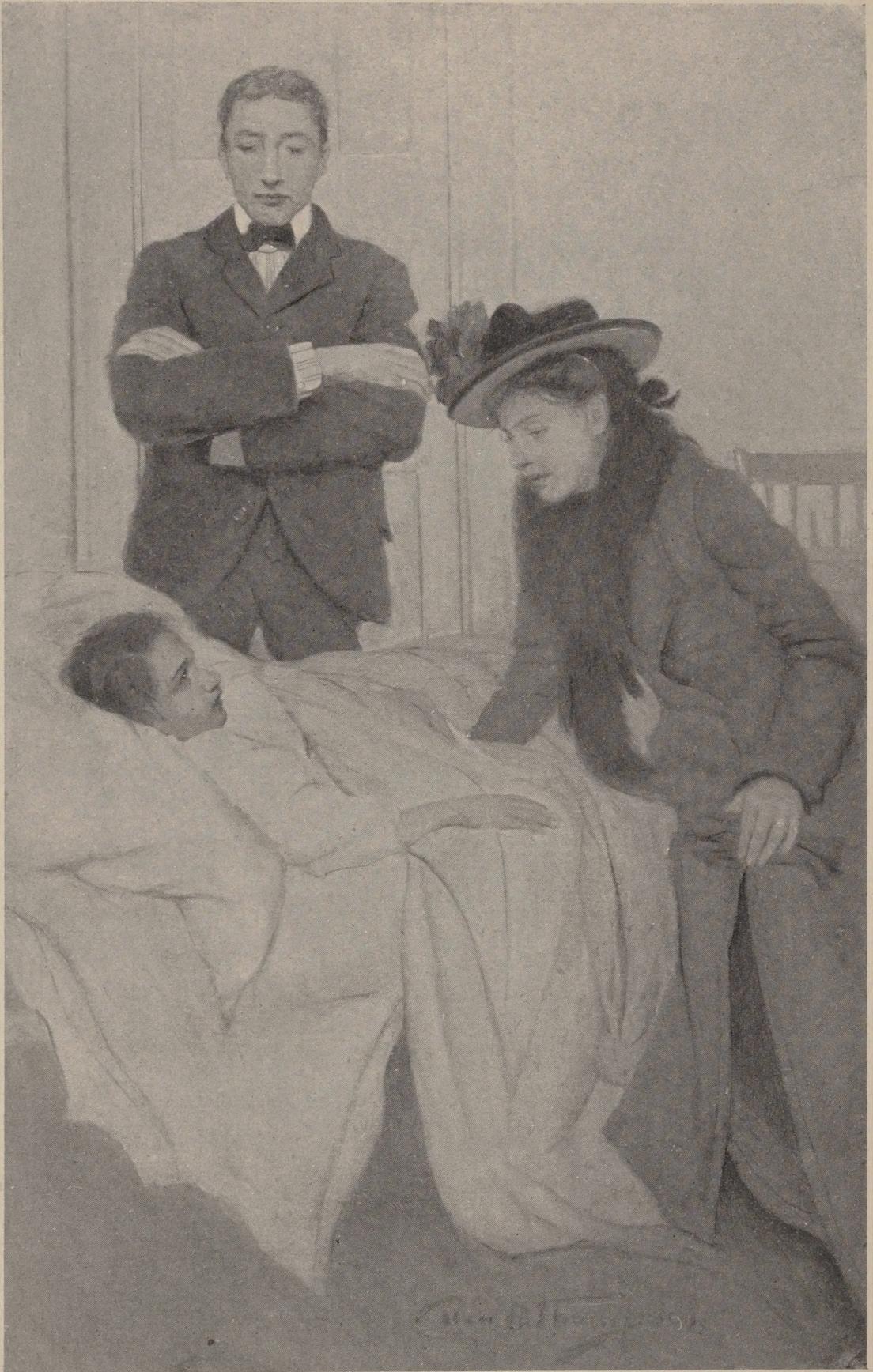
"It will keep him quiet, perhaps."

Nathalie bent over the child.

"What shall I sing, Mikie?" she asked.

He made a weak effort to cuddle against her, and she took him into her arms. Dr. Holden started to interpose; but she shook her head.

"No; he doesn't tire me. What shall it be, Mikie?"



“Lovin’ mudder,” he said faintly ; then his heavy lids drooped while, softly and clearly, Nathalie sang to him the little kindergarten song he had loved so well, the song of the playgrounds where he had first learned the meaning of the simple verb *to love*.

“ This is the loving mother,
Always good and dear.
This is the loving father,
Brave and full of cheer.”

Down-stairs in the street, Mikie’s mother was wrangling over the price of enough withered apples for a pudding. Over on Blackwell’s Island, Mikie’s father was working out a sentence for wife-beating. Up-stairs in the one-room tenement, Mikie was ending his misshapen little existence ; and his vague pictures of heaven included no motherly arms, no fatherly caresses ; but an everlasting kindergarten ring of angels where he should be eternally in the middle. Perhaps it was just as well. His life had been spent on the outside.

And meanwhile Nathalie’s voice crooned on and on,—

“ This happy, happy family,
They love each other well ——”

There was a broken-legged chair in the room, and a table which lacked a leaf. Yiddish newspapers, yellow from long sunning, did duty for window-shades, she noticed, and the few plates on the table were barred with elderly streaks of fat. Most of the family possessions were heaped on the floor, and the floor was not immaculate. Apparently the two little windows had not been opened since the preceding summer, and the air was murky and redolent of stale cabbage and staler onions. It sickened the girl and, without ceasing her song, she wondered how it would seem to Mikie to fall asleep here and waken in a clean, airy heaven. She stirred slightly, and a shabby tin engine clattered out from under the coverings.

Mikie's eyes opened dully. His hand left hers again, and wandered in the direction of his one and only plaything.

"Me mudder—was goin' ter take it—away," he said so faintly that Nathalie had to stoop to catch the halting words; "but I tol' her—leave it wid me. I'm goin' ter give it ter yer, teacher,—cos we useter—have fun—in de playgroun's. Now—git on wid—yer singin'."

The claw-like hand, engine and all, had

found its tired way back to Nathalie's hand ; but she could not see it now. Blinded with sudden tears, she was finishing, as steadily as she might, the last of the little song,—

“ We go across the street ;
We——”

Dr. Holden stepped forward abruptly ; but his work was ended. With his hand resting in Nathalie's, his head against her arm, Mikie had crossed that wider street which parted his sodden earth from the bright heaven.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE bell buzzed distractedly and, as soon as Peggy opened the door, Kingsley Barrett bounced into the hall.

"Where is Mr. Arterburn?" he demanded breathlessly.

"Here."

"Is he ill?"

"No; Harry is all right."

"Then why didn't he come, this morning?"

"Nathalie isn't very well, and——"

"Nathalie?"

"Yes. She has a cold or something, and Harry has been fussing over her, all night long. Now I might have a whole consumption, and he wouldn't worry a bit." Peggy's tone was aggrieved.

"Well, you don't look as if you were in any danger at present, Peggy. When you are, let me know and I'll order an extra fine black polish on my Sunday shoes. Can I see Mr. Arterburn?"

"Yes, I suppose so ; but I have told you all there is to tell."

"I don't doubt it ; but I want to see for myself that he is all right."

"Oh, you don't need to worry about Harry. He is never sick. He just thinks it is nice to pretend not well, so he won't have to ——"

"Shut up !" Kingsley ordered her, with an explosiveness which was scarcely courtly.

Peggy's back stiffened.

"I guess I can speak about my own brother as I choose," she said haughtily.

"I guess you can't, not if you choose to be saying pesky things about him, and I am around to stop you. If you ever get one tenth good enough to deserve to own such a brother, I shall be mightily astonished," Kingsley growled. "Now will you be good enough to tell him I am here ; or must I go to hunt him up ?"

"I'll go." And Peggy meekly departed.

Harry Arterburn's tired face lighted, as he caught sight of his pupil.

"Rex ! I am glad to see you."

Kingsley looked pleased at the greeting.

"I was so worried, I couldn't stop away," he said simply.

“Worried?”

“Yes, about you. I was afraid you were ill.”

Harry flushed.

“Has Mac been telling tales? He said he wouldn’t.”

“Then he hasn’t. Mac keeps his word always. But I didn’t need any tales. I have eyes of my own, and I have known for months that you weren’t well.”

“My bad temper?” Harry tried to laugh.

“No,” Kingsley said bluntly. “I shouldn’t have blamed you, if you’d had a beast of a temper sometimes; though, for a fact, I have tried to be more decent lately.”

“Don’t you suppose I have appreciated it, Rex?” his tutor asked as, with a swift, impulsive gesture, he held out his hand to the boy. “I wish you could enjoy our work together one half as much as I have done, this spring.”

There was a pause, while two pairs of honest, manly eyes, the gray and the blue, met each other squarely. Then Kingsley broke the pause.

“Perhaps I do,” he said gravely.

When Harry spoke again, there was a little break in his voice.

"Rex, Nathalie is ill."

"Really ill? What's the matter?"

"I don't know. I know nothing at all about illness; but I can't help being worried. She caught cold, four or five weeks ago, and it has hung on. She coughs a good deal, and she has kept adding more cold to what she had before. Yesterday, she was a great deal worse, and——"

"And you want Mac about as soon as you can get him," the boy supplemented.

"Yes, I think we would better have him come up. Where is he?"

"Out on his rounds somewhere."

Harry's face fell.

"Then we can't get him here till ——"

"Till I find him; but that won't be long," Kingsley interrupted. "Mac is such an old betty that he makes out a list of his calls, every morning. If he has left it in his office, as he generally does, I can track him and hunt him down. Anything else I can do?"

"No. Yes, telephone to the Dean that I can't meet my class, this afternoon. That's all, and thank you."

The boy lingered irresolutely.

"You don't think Nathalie ——"

Harry stopped him short.

“I’m not doing any thinking, Rex.”

“How are you going to stand it, yourself?” Kingsley asked anxiously.

“I shall stand it. People always do. Don’t worry.”

“All right. I’m gone. I shall be back with Mac before long.”

A cab stand was near, and Kingsley was in his cousin’s office, rummaging his desk, before the panting horse had come to a full stop. It was not that he was especially alarmed about Nathalie. With boyish optimism, he assured himself that she would come out all right; but he had seen the grayish shadow on his tutor’s face, and he was determined to spare Harry every possible moment of anxious waiting. His tutor was far from well; he himself had betrayed the fact that Dr. Holden considered the case serious, and Kingsley was man enough to admit to himself that, throughout the entire autumn and early winter, he had done his sinful best to wear out the nerves of his long-suffering preceptor. Now, the least he could do to atone for his past iniquities was to make the present crisis as easy as he could.

"It's all the fault of that beastly slumming, Mac," Harry Arterburn said vengefully, an hour later.

"I was afraid you would say so," Dr. Holden answered. "It was an awful day, that day we were in Hester Street, when Mikie died. I was anxious about Nathalie then, to see how she would stand the strain of it, and the exposure, and all. Betty did take cold; but I couldn't discover that Nathalie was any the worse for it. I made a point of seeing her, every day for a week. She caught this cold, going to drive with Kingsley."

"Confound it all! Am I responsible?" Kingsley demanded mournfully.

"You here, Rex? I thought you had gone home."

"No; I wanted to hear what you would say, and I thought Mr. Arterburn might have some errands for me to do. I waited, on the chance."

"I'll give you an errand, in five minutes. Now, Hal, you've got to abide by my orders. I am going to send a note to Mrs. Ainslee and ask her to take Peggy for a week. Aunt Babe will look out for Fizzums and Ralph; I know her of old. That will leave Sister Shaw

to take care of Nathalie, and I shall have a plain talk with her and give her to understand that I won't have any of her monkey tricks. What Nathalie needs is care and stimulants."

"Then you think ——"

"Yes, it is double pneumonia. That doesn't mean it is hopeless, though. The season is in her favor; Nathalie has a superb constitution, and her heart action is perfect. I think she will come through it safely. I wish I could feel as certain of you."

Harry smiled rather wanly.

"Promise me Nathalie, and I will promise you myself, Mac. I mustn't lose the child. You don't know what she is to me."

"I can imagine. I've had Betty, you know."

"It's not the same. Nathalie is my sister, my very own. Mac, I can't even think of losing her. You will pull her through?"

"Steady, old man!" Dr. Holden's tone was as even and soothing as if he had been talking to a nervous child. "I'll do all I can, Hal, unless you would rather have an older doctor."

Harry had been swift to regain his self-control. Now he spoke with a world of dignity in his low voice.

"I sent for you, Mac."

Their eyes met, and they exchanged a long look of perfect understanding. Then Dr. Holden fell to writing rapidly.

"Here, Rex," he said; "these are for your mother and Betty. Tell your mother I wish she would come up and help terrorize Eudora Evelina, and tell her to bring three bottles, not two, while she is about it. I am going to take Mr. Arterburn in hand, as well as Nathalie. He will need all the strength he can get, if he is to help take care of her. We needn't look for a trained nurse—yet."

Late that afternoon, the children were sent away, and the apartment took on the quiet routine which establishes itself with serious illness. Mrs. Barrett came over promptly, and, for a long hour, she and Eudora Evelina were shut up together in the pantry. When they emerged, both women showed signs of the strife; but Eudora Evelina was cowed, Mrs. Barrett triumphant. Then Mrs. Barrett crossed the hall to Nathalie's room.

She frowned, as she halted on the threshold. Confusion reigned on all sides, the confusion which accompanies sudden illness attended by a man untrained in nursing, and by a spinster

whose æsthetic sense is mediæval and rudimentary. Then Mrs. Barrett's eyes met those of Nathalie, and she smiled in a comfortable, reassuring fashion which convinced the girl that she was not so very ill, after all.

"Yes, I just popped in to see you for a minute," the guest said, as with a dozen deft touches she restored order to the room. "I am carrying off the boys, for a few days. I've been meaning to ask them, this long time, and this will be a good chance. Rex wanted me to tell you he is counting on your driving with him, Saturday. Good-bye." And she vanished.

"I don't like the looks of her, Mac," she said, that night, as she sat gazing up at her tall nephew. "It has taken a firm hold of her, and you will have a fight. If anything went wrong, I'm not sure her brother would go through it, either."

Dr. Holden nodded gravely. He was well aware that the fight was on, and that its issue was by no means a foregone conclusion.

"What about a nurse?" Mrs. Barrett asked, after a pause.

"I shall have to order one, in the morning, Aunt Babe. I hoped at first that they could

get on without; but it's no use. That Shaw woman doesn't do anything but sit and rock and munch cassia buds; in fact, I'm not sure she knows enough to do anything else. I am sorry, for Arterburn is in no condition to bear the extra expense of a nurse."

"He needn't. I'll see to that."

"That is like you, Aunt Babe; but I doubt if he would accept it from you. He's proud as Lucifer, and he thinks you have done too much for him, as it is."

"Hm!" Mrs. Barrett remarked thoughtfully. "If that is the case, we shall have to do a little judicious fibbing. Get the best nurse that is free, to-morrow, Miss Hillis, if you can. Then, for purposes of argument, we'll assume that she is a mere apology for a nurse and goes cheap. I can manage it somehow, if the nurse herself only possesses a sense of humor. Anything else I can do?"

"Isn't this enough?" Dr. Holden inquired gratefully. "You have taken several loads off my shoulders already, Aunt Babe."

"Never mind about the thanks of a grateful people," his aunt interposed. "We'll see about that, later. The fact is that I am absurdly fond of both those Arterburns. I am not sure

which of them I like better. If you will pull them through the crisis, Mac, I will agree to help with the convalescence. Now fight your best, and the spirit of your grandfather be upon you!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

“You who were ever the first to befriend a man,
You who were ever the first to defend a man,
You who had always the money to lend a man
 Down on his luck and hard up for a ‘V’!
Sure, you’ll be playing a harp in beatitude,
(And a quare sight you will be in that attitude)
Some day, where gratitude seems like a platitude
 You’ll find your latitude, Barney McGee!”

GIFFORD BARRETT looked up from a scattered, inky ream of music paper.

“Babe, you do flat detestably, and, as I have remarked before, the Hovey-Bullard combination isn’t classic.”

“Who taught it to me, I’d like to know. You said you heard it for the first time in a Back Bay drawing-room.”

“Yes, one Saturday night. After a supper of beans, even that would sound heavy and good. Still, there’s a time for all things, and I am just finishing the last movement of my symphony.”

Mrs. Barrett sat down on the piano stool and rested both elbows on the keys.

"I should think it was high time," she said disrespectfully, as soon as the discordant crash had died away. "You have been at work on it, this whole blessed winter. Why don't you do as Schubert did, and produce a masterpiece at a sitting?"

"Perhaps, because I'm not Schubert," Mr. Barrett suggested mildly.

"Nor yet the composer of *Barney McGee Giff*, I am mortally proud of you."

"Good old Babe! You are a comfort to a creative mind. The only drawback is that you would be just as enthusiastic, if I turned out trash."

"I wouldn't, then. Even if I'm not musical, I can read English. Don't you suppose I know what the critics say of your work? Ted's is nothing in comparison. I can imagine writing books. In fact, I did write a story once, and it met its death by being rejected until it was worn into shreds. Writing books is nothing but peptonized talking; writing music passes my ken. How one can pile a dozen noises on top of each other, and then string the piles together and have any idea

how the thing will sound in the end—that is a mystery to me. It's more intangible than mental healing. Giff!"

"Babe!"

"Are you going to make a great deal of money out of this symphony?"

Her husband looked at her in dismayed surprise.

"Phebe, this is the first time I ever heard you ask that question."

She laughed.

"Because I asked it once too often of Ted. I shall never forget the lecture she read me. But I am more mercenary than usual, just at present."

"Oh, I remember. I suppose you came for something."

"Don't I generally?" she asked audaciously.

"Yes, always. What now?"

"Money, and lots of it."

He put his hand into his pocket, and counted out four pennies, a five cent piece, and two silver dimes.

"Where is the bargain counter?" he inquired.

She took possession of the money.

“How generous! They are advertising a sale of dog collars, to-day, and I may need one some time. Just now, though, I want to do a work of supererogatory charity, and I want you to pay the bills, good big ones.” Then she grew grave. “Now, Giff, listen to me. I want to ask Nathalie and Harry Arterburn to Quantuck for July. Lyn and Paul will be West, this summer, and there will be plenty of room at Valhalla. Nathalie isn’t strong yet, and a month by the sea will set them both up wonderfully.”

“Have you asked them yet?”

“No; of course not, without saying anything to you.”

“Hurry up and ask them, then. They may like to be making their plans for it. When do you mean to go?”

“Directly after commencement, without coming home at all.”

Mr. Barrett thoughtfully drummed on the table.

“Arterburn is a Yale man, and Nathalie is a wholly presentable young person,” he suggested. “Why don’t we take them over there with us? Lyn could get extra cards for Nathalie for anything she was old enough to take

in, and it would be quite an event for her. I'll tell Arterburn I want him to keep an eye on Rex, this summer. That will make him feel easy in his mind. Now do go away. You are sitting on top of my trio, and your conversation is proving the death of my fugue. If you will only get out and leave me alone, I'll name this the Infanta Symphony in your honor."

"Better call it the Inferno, to judge by the sounds that have accompanied its production," she retorted. Then she went away out of the room, singing in a curious blending of many keys the closing refrain,—

"Barney, here's luck and more to you,
Barney, friends by the score to you,
Barney, true to the core to you,
Barney McGee!"

As Mrs. Barrett had predicted, five weeks before, it had been a close fight for Nathalie's life. The weak bends; the strong breaks. Nathalie, who had never before known a sick day in her life, went steadily down and down into the Valley of the Shadow. For ten days, Dr. Holden, Harry and the nurse fought shoulder to shoulder, bravely, but apparently

in vain. Nathalie was slowly but surely losing ground; just as surely it seemed that Harry Arterburn was giving his life in the hope of saving his sister. Dr. Holden remonstrated with him; but it was to no purpose. It did no good to forbid broken nights and restless days; and the doctor was forced to content himself with keeping careful watch over two patients instead of one.

Kingsley haunted the house, and Mrs. Barrett made daily calls. Then there came one sorrowful night when Dr. Holden scarcely left the nurse's side, and Kingsley, fully dressed, lay on the couch in the dining-room, to be within reach in case of need. But when morning came and they gathered around the breakfast-table, Kingsley's mood found vent in a succession of feeble jokes, and Dr. Holden felt that he had proved his right to the name of McAlister. His grandfather himself could have fought no braver fight than he had done.

His reward came, late that same afternoon, when he tore open a yellow envelope and read with surprise the telegram within,—

“ Proud as usual of my namesake! Thank Phebe for wiring. John McAlister.”

Nathalie went down like lead; she came up like a cork. And yet, after all, the last of June found both Harry and herself a good deal the worse for their experience; and it had been with much eagerness that Dr. Holden had urged upon them the advisability of accepting Mrs. Barrett's invitation.

And so it came about that the apartment was closed, Eudora Evelina was in Vermont with the three younger children and, one scorching morning in late June, Nathalie and Mrs. Barrett were perched on a window-seat in Vanderbilt, looking down upon the kaleidoscopic groups which swarmed over the Yale campus.

To Nathalie, the past five days had been a golden, glorious dream, and she was quite at a loss to understand the mood of her brother who had come back on a year when his class had no reunion, and to a campus shorn of certain old buildings whose very shadows were dear to him. He missed the narrow vista seen through the Old Treasury door; he missed the aged belfry of the Lyceum, and he mourned for North Middle as for an old-time friend.

Nathalie missed no old friends; instead, she

was giving her allegiance to many new ones: the elm-shadowed campus, the ivied brown walls, the groups of black-gowned seniors and brightly-dressed girls who wandered to and fro, laughing and chattering with an utter lack of reverence for a place whose bi-centennial was already in the past. On the night of her arrival, with Kingsley and her brother she strolled about the campus for a long hour which she never forgot. Years after, she would still see the full moon riding high above the little spires of the old library, still hear the chimes as they rang clearly down from Battell tower, and then lost themselves in the lilt of the student songs below.

Up in the Vanderbilt window, Kingsley rested, cherub fashion, on the edge of the window-seat at Nathalie's side.

"I tell you," he observed; "it's worth while gardening for Greek roots, if the crop is sure to turn into this sort of thing. Look at that old duffer in the scarlet hood! And that huge, iron-gray man in the eye-glasses and the blue and white toggery! Even the band looks shabby beside them."

"There is Lyn!" Mrs. Barrett announced from her window.

"Where?"

"Over in the group on the library steps. He has his hand up now. See him!"

"Steady, mater! He'll keep, and you might kill some Corporation, if you tumbled out on its head. Do you see him, Nathalie?"

"Yes; but who is the man with the purple hood, coming through Phelps Arch?" she answered, with a calmness which secretly delighted Kingsley who had feared lest Nathalie transfer her allegiance from him to his senior brother.

"Don't know. He's very cocky. Likewise, he feels the heat. There's your brother."

"Oh, where?"

"Look out! You'll tip yourself out of the window and get yourself stepped on. He is over there, not far from Lyn. Say, Nathalie, he's not a bad-looking fellow in his gown and hood."

"Did you suppose he was?"

"No; but, even in this crowd, you notice him. Cæsar Moses, look at the reception he is getting! Even your purple hood is saying 'Howdy' to him."

"Of course," Nathalie assented tranquilly. "They are glad to see him back."

"I wonder if they will feel that same way about me," Kingsley said meditatively.

"Depends on how you behave yourself."

"Lyn made Bones, and so did Mac."

"Harry made Keys."

"Shame you can't come to Yale, so you could take advantage of his pull! Now honestly, Nathalie, what do you think of Lyn?"

"I like him," she answered guardedly.

"Not as well as you do me, though?"

"No," she said honestly; "I don't. You are more my kind. He is too finicky and elegant."

"Thank you."

She laughed, as she realized what form her words had taken.

"Oh, but you aren't, you know," she added teasingly. "I was afraid you were going to be, when I first knew you; but now I know you better, I'm not worried. Still, there's room for improvement."

"I'm glad you admit so much. Are you coming to my commencement?"

"If I get bidden; but that is five years from now. You may have forgotten all about us."

He looked up at the girlish figure poised beside him.

“Not much danger, I fancy.”

But Mrs. Barrett broke in distractedly,—

“What can be the matter with Lyn’s mortar-board? It doesn’t fit him; and he takes his gown up on his heels, in spite of all my instructions. Horrid, flappy thing! It makes him look like a huge bat. Mac Holden, where did you drop down from?”

“New York. Aunt Ted and Betty will be here at eleven.”

“What! What for?”

“To see me take a degree.”

“You?”

In her excitement, Mrs. Barrett forgot her son outside and turned to her nephew within. Tall and alert, his blue eyes glowing, his every motion instinct with energy, Dr. McAlister Holden looked very much of a man, as he stood smiling down into the eyes of his aunt.

“Your tone isn’t at all respectful,” he objected.

“But you aren’t a graduate of anything.”

“Only of Yale.”

“That’s a good while ago.”

He laughed again. Then he explained.

“It’s an honorary M. A. I’ve only just been notified.”

“Mac! I’m so proud of you!” she said, as she seized his hands in hers.

“I knew you would like it, Aunt Babe. But the procession is about ready, and I must be off. Aunt Ted will go directly to the chapel, so don’t wait.” And he went striding away.

Out under the elms, the groups shifted and shifted again, then slowly melted into one long procession such as has few equals in America for beauty and impressiveness: the hooded and gowned Corporation, the long line of candidates for degrees, and then the still longer line of graduates, headed by gray-haired men bowed with years and honors, and ending with the callow bantlings of the last year’s class, as full of pranks as they had been at the hour of their admission to a seat on the fence. Around them, the crowd of spectators surged and wavered to and fro, seeking for a good point of view; above, the windows of the dormitories were filled with dainty gowns and bright faces; over their heads, the elm-trees rustled softly, sending down a benediction upon the sons of Yale who were leaving her, never to return.

Over the great throng there lay the hush of

expectant waiting. Then the band crashed into the time-honored march which, once heard there, never fails to take the listener back to the memory of many a June morning on the campus.

“On-ward, Christ-ian Soldiers,”

clear, true and *staccato*, it rings out, each year more impressive than the last.

“March-ing as to war !”

And the great line goes winding away past the fences, through Phelps Arch, across the city green, back again through Vanderbilt and so into the chapel.

More than an hour later, there came the presentation of candidates for honorary degrees, and the attention, which had wavered a little, quickened into life again. Up in the west gallery, the orchestra were lounging in their seats with the bored indifference of men who were harkening to an old story. The powers on the platform had relaxed something of their dignified erectness, and were flapping palm-leaf fans. In the north gallery, a little group of women were straining their eyes to

watch for the appearing of Dr. McAlister Holden.

He came at last, and a quick murmur greeted him and drowned the first words of his presentation. Then they detached themselves, and became clear and distinct,—

“—— Dr. McAlister Holden, for his great service rendered to the poor of New York City, for his gallant fight for the betterment of tenement house conditions, and for his generous giving of his professional abilities to the needs of the children ——”

But the rest was lost in the sound of applause. Up in the gallery, Nathalie looked on with bright, moist eyes, wondering vaguely why she felt so stirred by the scene, and trying her best to connect the central figure in it with the strong, cheery, simple-hearted man who had lifted Mikie from her tired arms.

Across the chapel, the full sunshine struck upon the silvery hair of a man whose head rose nobly from his rich robes. His face was alight with happiness; and Nathalie, who could neither know why he had chosen to appear in full academic dress, nor hear him murmuring to himself, “*Nunc dimittis, Domine!*” yet watched him steadily for a minute. Kingsley,

who was looking up from below, followed her eager glance.

“Pater!” he said excitedly. “Pater, come quick! Here’s grandpa!”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE mainland was blazing, one July morning; but, far out at sea, Quantuck lay cool and breezy, sparkling like a huge gem set in a silver ring.

It was too early for the bathing hour; but Nathalie and Harry had already donned their suits and strolled down to the beach. Nathalie was digging tunnels near the awning, and Harry lay sprawled beside her, with his head pillowed on his closed book and his eyes fixed upon the restless, sailless sea. A handful of wet sand falling on his neck roused him to the consciousness that Nathalie was bending over him, looking down at him with merry, laughing eyes.

"Come back to Quantuck, Harry!" she ordered him.

"*Adsum!*" he responded.

"Where were you?"

"Wandering back and forth between Göttingen and Heidelberg."

"Would you like to go back there?"

"Wouldn't I? Some day, we'll go together, chum. Meanwhile, it's not so bad, here at Quantuck."

"No; I should say not." Nathalie's tone was full of enthusiasm. Two weeks had sufficed to win her allegiance to the quaint fishing village and the broad stripe of beach where the surf pounded unceasingly. "You don't look the same fellow who came down here, Harry," she added, after a pause.

He sighed in mock resignation.

"I was wondering, only this morning, Nathalie, whether you ever would bleach out again. You were a tolerably decent-looking girl, when you came down here."

"What am I now?" she queried.

He laughed, as he rolled over on his back to stare up at the cloud-spotted sky.

"Well, you certainly look healthy," he admitted. "You are as fat as a cub, your hair is positively pale beside your face, and you whack your everlasting golf balls with a vigor that makes me tremble for the fate of your caddie."

"Likewise, I can swim," she added proudly. "You and Rex are making an expert of me."

I actually did eight strokes, yesterday, without finding my head where my heels ought to be. Who taught you to swim, Harry?"

"Father. We were at Annisquam, the year you were born, and he used to take me in, every day. It's not the only good lesson he gave me, though."

There was a short silence between them. Nathalie had stretched herself out on the sand, with her head resting on her plump, tanned arms, and her hair ruffled into a golden halo around her sunburned face. She was less pretty, perhaps, than she had been, a month before; but her look of perfect health and girlish activity atoned for the lack of beauty. Harry studied her face with pride.

"I wish he could have seen you now, Nathalie," he said impulsively.

She smiled.

"I miss them, Harry, miss them terribly. After all, though, if they were here now, we never could be half the chums we are. You would be absorbed in your work; I in school and in the prospect of coming out, some day or other. The grind we are going through isn't fun; but I believe we're better friends for putting it through, side by side."

"You're a comfort, chum. But I wish I didn't have to scrimp you so, just as you are growing up."

Regardless of who might see her, she turned around till her yellow head rested on his outstretched arm.

"I've all I need, Harry."

"Not all you want, though."

"Yes," she said thoughtfully; "I have all I want. As long as you keep strong, the rest doesn't count for much."

"Mac would say I was in thriving condition now," Harry observed, with a smile.

"Dear Dr. Holden!" Nathalie burst out impetuously. "Harry, I believe I never shall forget how he looked, standing there to get his degree. He made the others seem so inferior; and yet he was just as simple as he used to be when he ran races with the boys in Seward Park. I wonder if there are many such men."

"What a hero-worshipper you are!"

"Why shouldn't I be? Think of all he has done for me! I don't mean just the taking me through pneumonia," she added, as she felt her brother's arm tighten around her; "but

in all sorts of ways. All in all, Dr. Holden is the finest man I have ever known."

"What about me?"

She nestled her head against him contentedly.

"Oh, you are my brother and my chum, and an exception to every rule," she said, with a perfect unconsciousness of the future day when any exception would cease to exist. "Do you remember Dr. Holden in Yale?" she asked, after an interval.

"No; only in the glee club. He was in Lawrance, and only went over to White in his senior year, after I had left. I dimly remember his being discussed at the time of senior elections. His grandfather was a famous man in his own class, and the fellows said he helped Holden's pull. Since I have known Mac, I doubt it."

"Speaking of angels!" Kingsley observed, as he suddenly threw himself down beside them.

"I question whether angels are prone to have blistered noses, Rex," Nathalie suggested unkindly.

"That's your view," he responded. "But I was referring to another angel this time. Mac

has just wired us he will be over, Thursday afternoon."

"To be at Valhalla?"

"No; at the Lodge. Aunt Ted always claims that he is her property, down here, and Betty's summer would be spoiled, if he were in another cottage. We have him for so much of the time, winters, that it is only fair they should take their turn."

"How long will he be here?"

"A ten days or so."

"Is that all?"

"Too bad; but one can get up a good deal of complexion in that time. How soon are you coming in?"

"Oh, it's too early yet," she demurred. "Nobody is down here, nobody that counts. Let's wait till our people come."

"Once on a time, young woman, you made a row when I said something of that sort," Kingsley reminded her.

"Did I? I don't remember."

"I do. You pointed out the fact that I was exceeding snobbish, because I refused to ask an outsider to a party. Now you refuse to share the Atlantic Ocean with any but your own crowd. You ought to be blushing with

shame. You may be, for anything I know to the contrary; you're so burned that mere blushes can't get a fair show. Come along and get wet, this minute!" And they left Harry to stare after them contentedly, as they went racing down the beach.

Out on Quantuck links, that afternoon, the moorland was dappled with the moving shadows of the clouds which turned the wild roses from pink to crimson and darkened the patches of mealy plum to the tint of woodland moss. In the distance, David's Hills lay blue in the sunlight, and the white road to Town cut the moors like a silvery ruler laid across the island. Crisp and fresh, the wind blew up from the sea, bringing with it the clean, pure saltiness that comes from deep blue water and has never known the taint which rises from uncovered banks and bars of sand.

"We'll play twice round, to-day," Nathalie said, as she and Kingsley tramped away up the white, dusty road.

"Are you up to it?"

She made a grimace of disdain.

"It depends on what you mean. I've plenty of strength, even if I haven't the skill. But what about you?"



Alva B. Thompson

“Game law is off, and they told me I might do whatever I chose, this summer.”

“It must seem good, after you have been under strict orders for two years. I can't imagine how it would feel, to have to be careful. I was never ill in my life, till last spring, and that nearly killed me.”

“So Mac thought. But I have hated it, myself. It isn't so bad for a girl; but a fellow feels such a fool, when he can't go into things. Next winter, I'm going to make up for lost time.”

“Does that mean you are going to cut loose from Harry, and go into a school?”

“Not if I know myself. I like Mr. Arterburn too well for that. If he'll keep me, I'll keep him, sure thing. No; but I am going into polo and things. The pater says I can have a horse, and I mean to get all the fun that's going.”

She looked up at him with a sudden flash of admiration. He was striding along at her side, his cap on the back of his head, his sleeves rolled up above his brown elbows and both caddy bags slung on his back.

“Well, what's the matter?” he asked, as he met her glance.

"I was thinking how you had improved, since I first knew you," she answered saucily.

"All your work, ma'am. If you keep on long enough, you'll make a man of me."

"Me? I'd like to know how."

He surveyed her quizzically.

"Good work tells, even on poor material. The mater will assure you that you have knocked some of the nonsense out of me. Keep on knocking, and you may get some sense into me."

The lawn in front of the old gray club-house was full, that day, and a dozen groups were scattered around the links. Kingsley and Nathalie were well known, well liked in the summer colony. They nodded to friends here and there; yet, as usually happened, they preferred to go over the course by themselves. Not only were they closely matched; but they rarely tired of each other's society. Good friends as they had been in New York, the two weeks spent under one roof had bound them into a still closer friendship which was destined to outlast many a passing year. They never flirted, they often clashed; yet each of them was vaguely conscious of the perfect understanding between them, the perfect fellow-

ship, the perfect satisfaction gained only in the presence of the other. Neither of them ever paused to meditate upon the fact that one of them was a boy, the other a girl. Such minor and superficial details did not count in a friendship like theirs; it is only the uncertain friendship which calls for analysis.

At the fourth hole, they tied. As Nathalie settled her ball on the tee, Kingsley and the two caddies drew near to watch her stroke.

"Don't get too close to me, Louis," she cautioned her own caddie, as she took her driver from the bag. "You know I always want plenty of room, so you must be sure to stand away back of me. Look out for him, Rex. He gets so near that he makes me nervous."

Kingsley nodded his assent. Then he turned to answer the salutation of an approaching group. As he turned back again, he was in time to see Louis, in his eagerness forgetful of Nathalie's warning, edging forward to gain a good view of her play. For an instant, he stood there, careless of his danger, with the sunshine striking full across his ruddy, chubby little face, and the clean, salty wind lifting the curly yellow hair from his forehead. The next instant, the driver swung upward in a

swift, strong curve, straight towards the round, boyish face. Between instant and instant, there is small time for action; but it sufficed. With a single leap, Kingsley sprang forward and pushed the caddie to one side. Then, without a sound, he dropped at Nathalie's feet, still and white, with a purple bruise on his temple to mark the spot where the driver had dealt its merciless blow.

CHAPTER TWENTY

“YOU needn't have been so upset in your mind about it,” Kingsley said consolingly.

“You were a good deal upset, yourself, I noticed,” she answered, with a forced laugh.

“In my body, though. You are a sturdy lady, Nathalie; there's no doubt of the fact. If I hadn't been hard-headed, you would have done for me, sure.”

“Rex!” she said imploringly.

He saw that her nerves were still unsteady, and he forbore to tease her any longer.

“Honestly, Nathalie, it didn't amount to anything. The worst of it all was the scare you had. I was sorry not to warn you; but I hadn't time.”

“They say you saved Louis,” she said slowly. “It seemed to me I could strike them, when they were all telling that over and over again, and you lay there so still. As if I cared for Louis, beside you!”

"Louis is as good a little boy as ever wore a turn-down collar," Kingsley observed.

"Yes, just like fifty other boys, and you saved his life, when you didn't know what it would do to you."

"I didn't stop to think. There wasn't time for much red tape and final reflections. Under such conditions, it's a fellow's instinct to jump, and I jumped. That's all there was about it, so you needn't try to make me into a hero."

"You made yourself," she said gravely. "How did it feel, Rex?"

"As if a dozen lighthouses had tumbled on my head, and all their lights had blazed out at once. You haven't a gentle, feminine touch, Nathalie, and for once I must confess to having been hard hit."

Stooping over the hammock where he lay stretched out at full length, she patted the blue lump on his forehead.

"Poor old boy! I've left my mark on you. But that wasn't what I meant. How did it feel when you were getting up your nerve to rescue Louis?"

"It felt very much as if you'd bust the little chap to smithereens, if I didn't hurry up about it," he responded prosaically. "It's no go,

Nathalie. I can't do any heroics. Let's go down and see Mr. Bond bring in his fish."

It was Thursday morning and, side by side on the cliff, two cottages were in a stir of preparation. That afternoon, Dr. Holden was to reach Dandelion Lodge, Mrs. Farrington's cottage; next door, at Valhalla, Mrs. Barrett was making ready for the family dinner party which was to take place, that night. A sound of brooms and egg-beaters was in the land; and Mr. Barrett and Mr. Farrington had prudently retreated to the shelter of the awning and the dubious pleasures of a forty-eight-hour-old *Sun*, while their wives exchanged bulletins of domestic progress from their respective verandas.

Down on the sand, Nathalie and Kingsley lingered in the sunshine, watching Mr. Bond beach his dory and toss out the gleaming fish. Then, turning, they sauntered away up the beach with the breakers pounding heavily on one side of them, the wind lightly rustling the silver grass on the other. Far off on the horizon, a faint, thin banner of smoke marked the passing of an invisible steamer; nearer at hand, the white foam over the rips tossed and surged ceaselessly, lifting itself high against

the skyline and falling back again to the level sea.

“It is like your father’s *Merman*,” Nathalie said, as she halted to stare out across the intervening stretch of blue water. “Don’t you remember it?”

‘See the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.’

You can imagine them out there now, splashing up, with the foam running down their sides and tumbling back into the sea. I love this place, Rex. After Quantuck, Vermont will seem very tame.”

“Why don’t you stay here, then?”

“I’m going to, for two weeks more. Then we must be moving on.”

“I don’t see why. The pater wants Mr. Arterburn to keep track of my work. It’s a beastly bore, this studying in summer; but he says two hours a day won’t hurt me any. He was talking with your brother about it, this morning. If he stays, you will; won’t you?” he asked persuasively.

“I should think you would like me for a neighbor, after Tuesday’s performance. You don’t look at all pretty, Rex; you suggest a horned pout. What will your cousin say?”

"Mac? He will say that you don't need any more tonics." Kingsley laughed unfeelingly.

"All the more reason I should go away, before I do any more mischief," Nathalie responded. "If two weeks of Quantuck air can give me vigor to thump you like that, two months of it would suffice to make me slay the entire Barrett family and begin operations on the Farringtons. Do you know, it always seems to me as if Dr. Holden were Mrs. Farrington's son."

"Because he and Betty are such chums, most likely. They have always been together a great deal, since one summer when Mac was at the Lodge. Cousin Percival was here, that summer, too. I was too little to remember it; but I have heard tales. That was the year the island came near burning up."

Nathalie nodded. In the two weeks she had been at Quantuck, she had become fully versed in the history and traditions of the island.

"Isn't it very rough, to-day?" she asked, changing the subject sharply.

"A stiffish breeze, I suppose. It may be a bit choppy."

"Is your cousin a good sailor?"

Kingsley laughed at the question.

"When Mac was four years old, he took his first salting, tried to drown himself in the surf and was fished out more dead than alive. Since then, he's been immune, goes out with Mr. Bond in the dory on days when it makes one fairly seasick to watch a boat. He can even bring a dory in through the surf in a storm."

"Is there anything he can't do?" she asked impetuously.

Kingsley cocked the whites of his eyes at her, and shook his head.

"Go slow, Nathalie!" he warned her. "You don't want to make me jealous, for I'm a terrible man when I'm stirred. I brought you down here to play with me, not to talk about Mac Holden."

"Wait till he comes, and I'll talk to him," she retorted.

"If you do, I'll thump him, the way you did me, only I'll take my brasse. There's the mater now, coming down the board walk. Let's hurry, or we shall be late for a swim. I'll race you up to the cliff." And together, like a pair of jolly children, they went scampering away through the heavy sand.

"Come down to the awning with me, chum," Harry said, as they rose from the table, after lunch.

"Oh, but I don't want to," she demurred.

"Why not? I'm going, and it is so stupid to go alone."

"Sorry, Hal; but I want to prink, to do honor to Dr. Holden."

"Mac never notices. Besides, you can prink for dinner, if you are so anxious."

"He notices, fast enough. You wait and see. But what makes you go, Harry? Stay till Dr. Holden comes."

"Just the reason I'm going, and want you to go with me. We have to be here at dinner, Nathalie, so do let the family have Mac to themselves, this afternoon."

Her face fell.

"And not see him till night?"

Harry laughed outright at her disconsolate tone.

"Can't you wait till then? I shall begin to be jealous of Mac, if you stop to see him when I want you to amuse me. Oh, come on, chum! Mac will keep, and I may not."

Laughing, she rose from her seat on the edge of the veranda.

“If you had made that plea before you came to Quantuck, Harry, it would have torn my feelings to shreds ; but now ——” She paused, with an expressive glance up at his sunburned face. Then, as she met his eyes, she said impulsively, “Oh, but it’s good to have you look so well ! When I think of last spring, it ——”

“Don’t think of it, then,” he advised her.

“I can’t forget. Besides, you have to go to work again in two months. I wish we could play always, Harry.”

“It would grow horribly monotonous. Let’s make the most of the present good times, and come and play now. It is possible we may stay on here till the Barretts go back to the city in the fall. How do you like the prospect?”

“Sufficient unto the day is the Quantuck thereof,” she paraphrased gayly. “I could be content to stay here until the crack of doom.”

Side by side, they scrambled down the steep path leading from Valhalla to the foot of the cliff, and strolled along the board walk to the awnings. At that hour, only an occasional umbrella dotted the deserted beach ; but the sea was at its most perfect coloring. Blue and green and red shadows chased one an-

other across the silver waves, and the plunging foam over the rips was flecked with golden gleams. The breeze was sharp in their faces, and the breakers were curving high in air, then crashing heavily on the sand and sweeping up the beach in curling arabesques of white froth that sank away into the sand with a gurgle as of elfin laughter.

Half an hour later, just as the whistle sounded from the in-coming train, Nathalie scrambled to her feet.

“Harry, that woman is no addition to the beauties of the landscape. As a nurse, she is admirable; as a swimmer, she isn't æsthetic. Let's walk up to the lighthouse.”

“Unless you'd rather go to the links,” he suggested.

She shuddered.

“No; not until I can forget how Rex looked, while he lay on the ground. What if I had killed him, Harry?”

“Nobody would have blamed you, dear. It was Louis's fault.”

“What is the difference whose fault it is?” she said hotly. “It's not the blame; it is the very idea of losing Rex, of not having him within reach, and of feeling it was I who did

it. I should think Mrs. Barrett would hate me, whenever she looks at that bump on his dear old pate. Harry, she is wonderfully good to us. I don't see why."

"And Mr. Myers, last fall, warned me that she was very haughty and overbearing," he returned thoughtfully. "I can't understand it, chum. It will have to be enough for us that she is what she is, without trying to find a reason for it. The last year would have been a very different matter for the both of us, if it hadn't been for Mrs. Gifford Barrett."

But even then the end of Mrs. Barrett's kindness was much more distant than either he or Nathalie supposed. The past was over and good; the future was still broadening before them.

Up on the cliff at the lighthouse, Nathalie insisted upon it that she was too tired to walk another step. Accordingly, Harry left her there alone, while he followed the path on towards Quiddum Pond. Nathalie watched him until his figure vanished behind the brow of the hill, and her face was full of tender satisfaction. How broad-shouldered and alert he looked! How strong he was, yet how gentle! And, less than a year before, she had been

filled with dread at the prospect of this ready-made brother! Now she wondered vaguely what life had been like, before she had him. It was hard to remember a mood so foreign to her present one.

With her hands crossed lightly in her lap, her yellow hair blowing in the wind, and a dreamy content deepening the color of her eyes and playing around her mobile lips, she sat staring out across the sea to the dim shape of the lightship, far in the offing. So absorbed was she in her thoughts that she was deaf to a step in the grass behind her, and she started abruptly, when the well-known voice asked,—

“And how is my patient? And why in the world did she run off, when she knew that the doctor was coming?”

She looked up at the goodly figure by her side, and the color rushed into her face.

“Oh, Dr. Holden, it seemed as if you never would come!” she exclaimed joyously.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“**A**FTER all, not even Quantuck can spoil New York for me,” Nathalie said contentedly, a week or two after they had returned to the city.

“Quantuck with its winter population of thirteen souls and a dachshund wouldn't be inspiring. But it is a gorgeous day. Come and play out of doors.”

“I ought to finish this skirt, and you know you ought to be studying. Harry says he really begins to have some hope of you,” she said saucily.

“Poor soul! Let's hope he won't be disappointed. Perhaps I'd better take it easy, and not arouse false aspirations. Let your skirt go hang.”

“It isn't ready yet.”

He laughed at her quibble.

“All right, then throw it on the floor in the corner. Leave it, anyhow. If need be, I'll take it home with me, and finish it, this even-

ing. It's a sin to stay inside a house, on such a yellow day as this."

"Where do you want to go?" she asked, as she folded up her work.

"Anywhere. Anywhere but to your beastly Seward Park, that is. If I give you too much latitude, you'll lug me off down there to play beanbag with the hoodle-ums. You did it once, and once is quite enough."

"You lack the spirit of brotherly love, Rex," she admonished him gravely.

"Maybe so. Those fellows are only tenth cousins, anyway. Let's go down to the park and prowl, till we grind out another inspiration to take us on to somewhere else."

"Wait till I get my hat. Fizzums, will you be a very good boy till sister comes back, very good indeed, and not trouble Cousin Eudora?"

"Ye-es. Where is Cousin Vedowa?"

"She is in her room, writing some letters."

"Ven I will go an' wite some letters wiv her," Fizzums suggested.

Nathalie shook her head. She recalled the difficulty with which, even under the best of conditions, Eudora Evelina toiled through her correspondence. She also recalled the unstable qualities of Fizzums' tongue.

"No, Fizzums, you must stay here. When sister comes back, if you've been a good boy and not made Cousin Eudora one bit of trouble, sister will take you out for a walk and get some roses into your cheeks."

"I don't want any woses in mine cheeks; I'd ravver have woses in mine hands where I can smell of vem," he objected. "Some day, when I'm gwown up, Nathalie, will mine cheeks be all spotty-bwown, like Mr. Wex Bawwett's?"

Nathalie fled from answering the question. Fizzums watched the door close behind them. Then he said composedly,—

"Now I will wait till vey are all gone away, an' ven I will go out to walk, mine own se'f. I fink I will take mine money-box wiv me; an' ven I can buy some candy. Candy an' money are ve two best fings, an' I fink I will have some of bofe. Ven, when Cousin Vedowa wants to give me a swashy kiss, I can give her a candy instead." He yawned. "I am talking a stwing, just like Peggy," he continued. "I fink I will wock minese'f in ve by-low chair for a while. Ven I will go out to walk."

The by-low chair proved potent in its influ-

ences, and Fizzums made a swift trip to the Land of Nod. He returned, half an hour later, however, and, with a prodigious yawn, he sat up and looked about him with drowsy, heavy-lidded eyes.

"Oh, yes, I merember now," he said slowly. "I was finking I would take mine money-box an' go to buy Cousin Vedowa a candy. Well, I'm coming."

In his own room, he moved a chair to the side of the bureau and, clambering up, took down his tin bank. It rattled as he moved it, and, fearful lest Cousin Eudora should hear it and come to prevent his expedition, he muffled it in the front of his little blouse. In the hall, he paused long enough to put on Ralph's discarded straw hat and to possess himself of Harry's umbrella. Then he turned back.

"Pwaps I might be cold wound mine neck," he said. "I will look for a tippet to tie wound me."

No tippet was forthcoming for a time. Then a stealthy search in Nathalie's closet brought to light a sable fox collar, unpacked only that morning. Fizzums sniffed at it disdainfully.

"It smells vewy stwange," he said to him-

self. "Maybe in ve outdoorness it won't be so bad. Now I fink I'm weady." And with the hat on his head, the fluffy collar enveloping the lobes of his ears and trailing on the ground at his feet, one hand clutching the scarlet bank and the umbrella clasped in the other arm, Fizzums softly opened the door, crept down into the street and set forth to view the town on his own account.

The Providence which watches over little children apparently bestirred itself in behalf of Fizzums. The Boulevard was nearly deserted, and he strolled along it in perfect safety, turned into One Hundred and Tenth Street and then, attracted by the trees within the gateway, he rambled on into the park. Occasionally his equipment caused him some little trouble. Once the umbrella fell out of his arms and rolled into a muddy gutter; once he brought himself to a standstill by stepping on the fluffy tails which tipped his fur collar. Two of the tails gave way, in the course of his struggles; and Fizzums, glad to be free from the annoyance of them, left them lying in the middle of the sidewalk and passed on.

Once inside the park, the broad green stretches of sunshiny lawn seemed to him an

ideal spot for a walk, and, leaving the path, he struck out across the grass.

“But it is vewy sunny here,” he observed; “an’ I might get sunstwuck an’ die. I fink I will open ve pawasol, an’ ven vere won’t be any danger.”

There was another interval of struggle, while Fizzums laid down his bank on the grass and devoted himself to the patent snap on the band of the umbrella. Then the spring absorbed his attention; but at last it yielded and the umbrella flew open.

“Vere, vat is a gweat deal better. Ve tip-pet is vewy warm, an’ ve pawasol will cool it off a gweat deal. Woo! How ve wind blows! It tips ve pawasol all over itse’f. Maybe it will cawwy me up to heaven, like ve flew chawiot.”

A flock of sheep changed his train of thought, and he charged them at a gallop, waving his umbrella before him. Then he halted to view the stampede.

“Vat was vewy funny, vewy funny indeed. Vey must have been fwaid-cats, I should fink. Ve pawasol wouldn’t hurt vem any. Now I will find ve candy store; I am vewy hungwy. Oh, where did I do wiv mine money-box?”

He searched his tiny pockets and felt in the slack of his blouse; but in vain.

“I wants mine money-box! Vere was fwee, seveal dollars in it, an’ I wants some candy. Oh, where did I do wiv mine money-box!”

Dropping down his umbrella, he seated himself on the grass and gave tongue to his woe. The tears fell fast, and he wiped them away with the denuded ends of his fur collar. Then he sneezed. The sneeze proved to be a diversion.

“Vis is a vevy funny tippet. It sneezes me, evey time I smell it. Oh, look at ve pawasol! It is just like a gweat big hopstool.” He made a dive for it, just as the wind prepared to waft it away. Then, still sitting on the ground, he held it above his head and looked about him. “Vere aren’t any candy here, an’ I am hungwy. Vere are some wed bewwies, vough; maybe vey are good to eat.” He rose, umbrella and all, and trudged away towards a mountain ash whose branches drooped low over a dark green bench.

Standing on the bench, it was easy for him to reach the berries. His hands were already full of the loaded twigs, when a blue-coated apparition swept down upon him.

"Stop breaking the tree, little boy!"

Fizzums looked up hastily.

"But I'm hungwy," he replied.

"I can't help that. Besides, you mustn't eat those."

"Why not?"

"They'd kill you, sonny."

"An' ven would I be a nangel?" Fizzums inquired.

The man surveyed him dubiously.

"I'll bet you wouldn't."

"Ven I won't eat 'em," Fizzums replied promptly. "I've wanted to be a nangel; but, if I can't, vere's no use goin' dead."

"You'd much better go home," the man suggested.

"But I don't know where home is."

"Are you lost?"

"Yes; but I can find minese'f again, when I gets weady," Fizzums replied calmly.

"What's your name?"

"Fizzums."

"Fizzums? That's not a name."

"I don't fink you're vewy p'lite," Fizzums rebuked him. "It is my name, too. Vey calls me Fizzums Attybun."

"Where do you live?"

Fizzums made a comprehensive gesture.

“Over vere, humbuck vose twees.”

“That’s not very definite. Who is your papa, little boy?”

“He’s a nangel.”

“A—what?”

“A nangel. He’s dead in ve gwound; but his spiwit gwowed up into a nangel. Vat’s what you will do, some time,” he added encouragingly.

The policeman manifested a stolid indifference to theological discussion.

“Where does your mother live?” he asked.

“In heaven,” Fizzums replied blandly.

“Oh, are they all dead? Who keeps your house?”

“Cousin Vedowa. Oh, vat makes me fink. Here’s some scassium bugs. Want some?” And Fizzums plunged his fist into his pocket and brought out a dozen brown stubs from which he had sucked all the sugar. Shaking an accurate half into the pink palm of his other hand, he held them out to the policeman. “Vere,” he said, with a curious imitation of Eudora Evelina’s tone; “you must eat vem vevy slow, so vey will last a long time, for vose are all I shall give you now.”

The guardian of the peace took one and shut his teeth upon it. Then, pursing out his lips, he blew it afar into space.

"Thank you, I don't know as I care for any more," he said ungratefully.

Kingsley and Nathalie, meanwhile, had failed to find any inspiration which should lead them out of the park, and, for more than an hour, they had been loitering along the open paths to the north of the reservoir. Though November was still two weeks distant, a purple haze as of Indian summer lay over the broad stretches of lawn and woodland, and shaded into vivid gold where the sunbeams shot across it. Under the brow of the hill, no breeze reached them; but through the still, chill air the golden birch leaves dropped silently one by one and lay in a pale yellow carpet over the rank autumn grass. Around them, the noise of the city sank away in the distance; above their heads, a few belated robins were discussing their plans for the winter.

"I shall be seventeen, next week," Nathalie said abruptly. "It seems queer to think of being so old. I keep wondering what I shall do, when I am grown up."

“What do you want to do?”

“Start a day nursery, or else be president of a college.”

“You are a modest soul. Why don't you sigh to enter the navy, and to write poems on death?”

“They're not in my line; I like children and education. I'd like it, of course, if I could write things like your father's symphonies. It must be great fun to beat time, and get lots of wreaths and applause. I wouldn't mind doing the work Dr. Holden does, either.”

“The up-town, or the down?”

“The down-town, of course. Anybody can cure clean rich people; it's the dingy, half-starved baby that shows what a doctor is good for.”

“I was neither dingy nor starved, and it took three doctors to cure me.”

“Well, I think perhaps you were worth the trouble. I do wish that scar on your forehead would grow up; it always makes me feel like a Lady Macbeth, or a Borgia, or something.”

Kingsley laughed.

“Just think! A year ago, when I told the

pater it would be Mr. Arterburn or nobody, I didn't suppose you would be beating my brains out. Nathalie, you have been a trial to me."

"Yes, I have made two attempts to kill you, and once, at least, I spoiled your devotions. Poor Nicodemus! I wonder how he likes country life." She was silent for a minute. "Rex," she added suddenly; "hold up your fingers. I am going to count up my blessings, the new ones. That will be a fit preparation for my birthday."

"You'd much better make some good resolutions."

"I don't need to; I'm good enough. Now count. Your mother, and her sewing lessons—— Really, I have ever so many more gowns now, and they don't cost half so much——and Quantuck, and Nicodemus, and Dr. Holden's taking me to Seward Park, and——"

"There's one of your hoodlums now," Kingsley interrupted. "What's more, in his own vernacular, de copper's cotched him swipin' berries, an' is goin' ter chase him out'n de park."

"At least, you know the accent of the East Side, Rex. Cunning monkey! Where did he

ever get his collar? And that ruin of an umbrella! I hope the ribs are strong, if he is going to use it as a bludgeon."

"You'd much better worry about the policeman's ribs. The youngster was extravagant, when he was measured for his hat. Nathalie, you should train your kids to stay where they belong. Central Park is no place for such imps."

She mistook his jest for earnest.

"It is for just such children that the parks are made. Even such smutty little beings as this have a right to come here. Poor baby! It is probably his only chance to get a breath of fresh air."

"He looks a good deal more as if fresh water would be an improvement," Kingsley suggested.

"He is rather dirty," Nathalie admitted. "It is the real Hester Street tint; I recognize it, even from this distance. How do you suppose he ever strayed up here? I don't see any mother."

They halted to watch the strife. The child was beating the policeman with a tattered ruin which once had been an umbrella; while the man strove in vain to seize him, for the

child was dodging about this way and that, and shrieking like a little fury. Suddenly he paused and glanced across the grass to the spot where Nathalie and Kingsley were standing. The umbrella waved again, this time in their direction, and a prolonged shout came to their ears. Nathalie started forward.

“He knows me, Rex! It is one of our Seward Park babies. I was sure it was; those children are unmistakable. Poor little thing! He has lost his way, and those cruel policemen are always so hard on the tenement children. Come quick! We must help him out of his woes and take him home.”

With Kingsley at her side, she turned and hurried across the grass in the direction of the renewed strife. Half-way to the child, she halted suddenly.

“Kingsley McAlister Barrett!” she gasped.
“It’s—it’s Fizzums!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

“O H, Babe!”

“When you accent the *oh*, I always know it is good news. What is it now, Giff?”

“Glories galore. What do you say to spending the winter in Europe?”

“I am your dutiful wife. Only give me time to pack my second-best frock, and I'll follow you to Victoria Nyanza, if necessary. What is the new glory?”

“I am asked to conduct my new symphony in Berlin; the Three Choirs Festival is to sing *The Merman*, next summer, and I'd like to sandwich in a little studying, between times.”

“You study!” Mrs. Barrett's accent was disdainful.

“Why not, if you please? I trust I'm not too old to learn new tricks.”

“No; but you are too famous. There's nobody in America to compare with you; they all say it.”

“My adoring and adorable wife, put not your trust in the critic.”

“But I do, when he says nice things. If he didn't, I would—smash him,” she concluded vindictively.

“And you will go over with me?”

“I don't see any help for it. You must go, and I'm not going to have you gallivanting off without me. But what about Rex?”

“Of course, I shall take him, too. A year abroad will develop him wonderfully.”

“Yes, only he is eighteen now, and he will be a patriarch, by the time he gets inside Yale. I should hate to have our latest-born alluded to as Pa Barrett, Giff.”

“This won't make any difference. Arterburn will have to go, too.”

“You extravagant fellow! Who will pay the bills?”

“I'll see to that. Don't pull down the corners of your mouth to that extent, for I was just going to suggest our taking Nathalie along with us. She can do lessons with Rex, and sew patchwork with you, and copy music for me in the intervals.”

Mrs. Barrett reflected rapidly; then she nodded.

"I approve, Giff. She is a good comrade for Rex, and I like her. It will make you rather an expensive caravan; but, if you can manage the finances, I will see that Nathalie is clothed and chaperoned. I am the most pleased for Harry. It will keep him from working himself to death, as he did, last winter."

"What is that about Arterburn?" Dr. Holden asked, as he came into the room.

"Giff is invited to pluck some German laurels, and he is planning to take Harry over, as tutor for Rex, this winter."

"What about Nathalie?" Dr. Holden inquired.

"Giff says he is going to take her, too."

"Then my blessing go with you! It would do either one of them a world of good; but it would be too bad to separate them."

"If only Arterburn will go!" Mr. Barrett added doubtfully.

"Of course he will go."

"I'm not so sure of that. It means his dropping out of the race for university advancement. He may think it's not worth while to throw over a small permanent position for a larger temporary one."

Dr. Holden sat frowning at the fire.

“That’s the danger, Uncle Giff. If he were free from domestic encumbrances and perfectly strong, I should advise him to stick where he is. As it is, though — Why, confound it, the chance means everything to him! He must go.”

“If —” Mrs. Barrett suggested.

“No *if* about it. He shall go. I think I can promise you that. I’ve not much pull; but I’ll tug hard at what I have. When do you want to sail?”

“The first of December.”

“For how long?”

“Ten months.”

“Ten months. Till October.” Mac pondered. “Well, I think I can make it safe for you to talk to Arterburn, in a few days. I am glad for his sake, and I am a good deal pleased for Nathalie, Aunt Babe. It is a golden chance for her, and she is a girl to make the most of it.”

He rose and started to leave the room. At the door, he turned back.

“By the way, ask her first for herself, without telling her that Arterburn is in the scheme,” he suggested.

It was less than a week afterwards that Nathalie and Harry were bidden to dine at the Barretts'. Such invitations were by no means uncommon; and the brother and sister accepted this one, without in the least suspecting that the talk of the evening would make a radical change in their plans for the next ten months. Once inside the Barrett house, however, they suddenly became conscious of a sort of mental thunder in the air. Mr. Barrett was unusually silent; Mrs. Barrett was jerky in her conversation, as if she were with difficulty suppressing some subject which insisted upon utterance. Dr. Holden and Kingsley did their best; but it was a stiff, uncomfortable meal, and, before the fish was eaten, Nathalie was casting about in her mind for an excuse to beat an early retreat.

"Arterburn, I am sorry; but I shall have to increase your duties with Rex," Mr. Barrett began abruptly, as soon as his wife had carried Nathalie off, after dinner.

"What is the matter? Doesn't he get on fast enough?" Harry asked uneasily.

"Yes, but I am going to need a resident tutor for him. There is no use in beating about the bush. I have to sail for Germany,

the first of December. Mrs. Barrett and Rex will go with me for the winter; and we thought it would be best for you to go with us, as Rex's tutor, and take Nathalie along, too."

"I—I—but ——" Harry stammered, as the color died out of his face.

"Now hold on, Hal! Don't mix up things by talking too soon," Dr. Holden interrupted. "Hear Uncle Giff through. Then you can have your say."

"So you are mixed up in the scheme, too?" Harry asked.

"Yes, to the extent of prescribing it for you. In fact, it is almost imperative. The change will put you on your feet again sooner than anything else can do, put you on them to stay there, I hope. If you take my advice, you send the children off with Eudora Evelina by the first train, and then pack your trunks with neatness and dispatch."

"It is this way, Arterburn," Mr. Barrett broke in kindly; "if you go, you will have your same salary, with expenses added; and you will have some chance to study, as we shall be in Berlin, most of the winter. I want to do some work there, myself. Nathalie, of

course, will go as our guest. Her friendship is the best thing in the world for Rex; it makes him contented, keeps him steady, and her downright ways are very wholesome for him. Of course, your university work is the great obstacle; but Mac has heard it whispered in high places that, if you were to ask for leave of absence for ten months of study, it would be granted. We shall be home in time for Rex to enter Yale, next fall."

For a moment, the silence was unbroken. Then Harry turned to Mr. Barrett.

"I wish I could thank —— Oh, hang it! I can't say anything worth while, Mr. Barrett; but, some day, you'll know." But he took off his glasses and laid them on the table beside him, before he could see the genial, jovial face of his host.

Mrs. Barrett looked up, as the three men entered the library.

"Then it is all right?" she asked quickly.

"Right as a trivet," her husband assured her.

"I don't know what a trivet is; but no matter, for you all look content. Now, Nathalie Arterburn, I want you to listen to me."

"Don't I always?" she inquired, laughing at the warning finger which Mrs. Barrett had raised.

"Yes; but this is an uncommonly critical matter. Do you want to go abroad?"

"Of course. Who doesn't?" Nathalie answered, still laughing at the pompousness of Mrs. Barrett's tone.

"Very well, come along."

"To-night?" the girl questioned merrily.

"No; you will need a few hours for your packing. The first of December will be time enough."

All at once it dawned upon Nathalie that there was a real meaning underlying Mrs. Barrett's bantering words. She turned and looked from her brother to Dr. Holden. They stared down at her with impenetrable faces, and she turned back to Mrs. Barrett once more.

"What do you mean?" she demanded abruptly, half dazed by the mystery surrounding her, and uncertain whether to laugh again.

Mrs. Barrett saw her nervousness. With a gentle, caressing touch, she laid her hand on Nathalie's clasped fingers.

"It is no joke, dear girl. Mr. Barrett is

going to Europe for ten months, and will take Rex and me with him. We all of us want you to go with us as our guest, to keep Rex from getting homesick and to prevent his forgetting his American manners. We shall be in Germany a good deal of the time; but of course we shall stop in Paris and London, and see Switzerland. It will only be for ten months, dear. Will you go?"

Nathalie's face was radiant, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes gleaming with some subtle inward fire. Then, all at once, the fire went out of her face and manner, and she shut her hands over a fold of her skirt. The pause was long enough for her to draw one slow, steady breath, then another.

"There is nothing in the whole world that would be better," she said then, as she touched Mrs. Barrett's hand with fingers that, of a sudden, were like ice. "I should be so happy with you, and over there. I have always wanted to go, more than I have wanted anything else. But, if you don't mind—— Truly, I don't mean to be rude, Mrs. Barrett;—but—I think perhaps I'd rather stay with Harry."

Three weeks later, Nathalie stood in the stern of the *Kaiserina*, watching the crowd on

the pier grow vague in the distance. Long after the other faces had blended into an undistinguishable mass, she felt sure she could still detach one yellow head set on a pair of broad shoulders. At last, even that faded away, and she turned her eyes from the pier to the single heavy-headed rose in her hand. At her side, her brother watched her with a loving, curious scrutiny.

"Are you sorry to go, after all, chum?" he asked.

She raised her eyes till they met his with perfect sincerity.

"No, Harry; I would go to the world's end with you," she said loyally.

THE END

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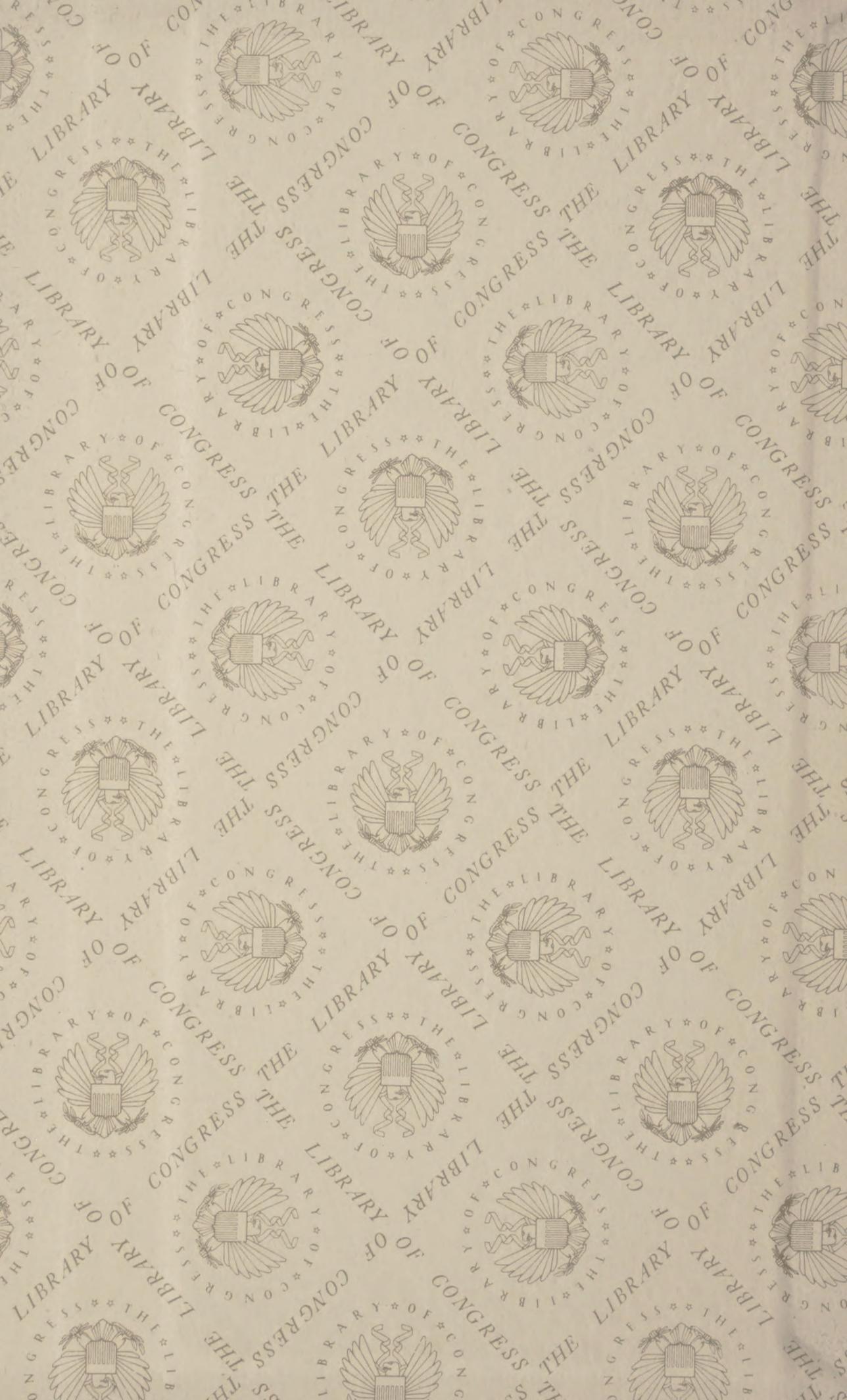
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